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N O R A .

VOL. I.



# N O R A .

BY

THE LADY EMILY PONSONBY,

AUTHOR OF

“THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE,”

&c. &c.

Fierce passions discompose the mind  
As tempests lash the sea.

COWPER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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# N O R A .

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## CHAPTER I.

“**A** LITTLE girl!—oh! goodness me!”  
exclaimed an old gentleman to  
himself as he sat at breakfast.

An old gentleman, so he was called, and  
called himself, but he was only fifty-eight,  
and hale and healthy. He was seated on a  
high-backed chair with a tray before him.  
One muffin and four thin bits of toast com-  
posed his breakfast this day, and every day.  
He was thin and spare; his complexion was  
drab, his hair speckled drab and grey. His  
brows were shaggy, his mouth was large,

Gen. Mrs. Ray 27 Apr. 1852. Thorp. 3v. 201. Longdon 15 July 55-

and his nose ended in a knob. Yet this ungainly old gentleman—for ungainly he certainly was—had a kind of attraction about him. He was so ugly that the fact of ugliness was accepted as inevitable, and then came the surprise of a charm. Wherein lay the charm it was hard to say. He was, and he looked, peevish, and crabbed, and sour, and yet the kind heart that was buried beneath all these human infirmities found a means of peering out.

Mr. Smythe, for this was his name, was a London merchant. He had a fortune which people who liked to use large words called princely; and because he made but little show with this princely fortune, people who liked to use hard words called him a miser. But these last were few. As the kind heart gleamed out of the ugly face, so did the generous nature out of a cold kind of life.

He was one of those who so hated show, who were so innately modest in their charity, that they tried to deceive with an appearance of niggardliness; exulting when they could deceive, and most of all trying to deceive themselves. He therefore did good irregularly; by stealth, by snatches; at every fresh act of charity assuring himself it was for the last time.

To return to the beginning of the chapter. On each side of the breakfast-tray, this morning and every morning, letters and papers were laid. Letters on one side, printed papers on the other. Never was Mr. Smythe's face more peevish than at this moment of the day. He touched his letters as if they burnt him, and some were laid apart with a look which may be seen on board a steamer. These were the begging letters, from individuals known or unknown, and it

was to resist these that he put on his sour morning face.

The letter that caused his exclamation was not a regular begging letter. It contained a request, indeed, and from almost a stranger; but it was not a begging letter. In some of Mr. Smythe's mercantile transactions he had made the acquaintance of a gentleman living abroad, and had had a good deal of communication with him. They had met only once. Their acquaintance, such a it was, was by letter, and was not on subjects which reveal the affectionate cast of a character. Nevertheless, it was to Mr. Smythe that the gentleman from a death-bed bequeathed his daughter. Somehow or other, through the rugged face, and the hard crust of the shrewd merchant's correspondence, he had discovered that soft place on which he might build his hope.

The request was a bold one. It was that Mr. Smythe would receive into his house and watch over the interests of a young girl of eighteen or nineteen, with whom he had no connection. A bold request, and one which most men would have looked upon as an impossible one. After making his request, the gentleman proceeded to tell his reasons.

“I was married under peculiar circumstances—such circumstances as induce me to cast myself and my child on your compassion. About twenty years ago, I, then a mature bachelor of five-and-forty, was travelling in the Midland Counties of England. I was taken ill at a small country inn; my illness was almost to death, and that it was not to death was, the physician said, solely owing to the presence of mind and to the care of my landlady. My gratitude was

naturally great, and I cast about in my mind what manner of reward I should proffer her.

“During my convalescence I could not help perceiving that she often brought her daughter into my room, and sometimes needlessly employed her in the little attentions an invalid is compelled to receive. There was nothing remarkable in the girl, but she was handy and neat, and tolerably good-looking; and gradually my thoughts submitted themselves as to a doom to the fate which I saw was being prepared for me. I remembered the story of Hooker; but, like him, I felt helpless in my landlady’s hands. I submitted to my doom. I write lightly on the subject; God knows I do not lightly think of my weakness or my mistake. Not that I had any reason to complain, as far as I myself was concerned. My wife was a

good, useful wife to me, and when she died I regretted her. If she were now alive I should fearlessly entrust her child to her guardianship, knowing she would protect her in that point where protection is needed. But she is dead, and my daughter may become in consequence a prey to covetousness and be doomed to misery. She has a number of relatives in a different rank of life from that in which she has been brought up. Some are sensible, respectable people, and, aware of the difference between them in education and nurture, will not molest her. Others are less respectably-minded, and my daughter's fortune, though small, is an object to them. One family in particular—that is to say, one young man, the only son of this family, at this present time a smart young man in a haberdasher's shop—has persecuted her with his attentions. My daughter is a weak, soft-

natured girl, ill-fitted to contend, and likely to fall a prey to persecutions ; but a docile, dutiful girl, with a sense of right, and a trust in those who protect her.

“ I know not on whom to cast her but on you. Your kindness in two cases which have come to my knowledge ”—here he specified them, and as he read the words, Mr. Smythe winced and shivered, for he had supposed that no human eye had seen his weakness—“ emboldens me to come to you. You have a large house, and my daughter has a fortune, which I have left in your hands until her marriage. I ask nothing for her, nor desire it, but that she may have the shelter of your house, the benefit of your advice, and the protection of your name.”

The rest of the letter became pathetic in its entreaties, its gratitude and its trust, and



though he fought against the conviction through every sentence of the letter, Mr. Smythe knew from the first that he should give way.

When he laid the letter down, he said that he would not answer it that day; but even while he said it, he knew he was saying what was false. He knew that he should not sleep in peace until he had relieved the anxiety of the dying man; and so it was that the post carried out a letter of acquiescence. Thus it was that Mr. Smythe, the old bachelor, who had lived alone for twenty-eight years, was doomed to receive the most troublesome of guests, a young lady, into his house.

As soon as the weakness of his compassion,—so he called it,—was relieved by the departure of the letter, his peace was gone. He could not get his future troubles out of

his thoughts. Every time the servant came into the room he blushed ; and night and day revolved the terms in which he should make known, to that sedate and respectable man, the event that was about to occur.

The nightmare of this dread became intolerable, and after four days the disclosure was abruptly made.

“Stephens, I am going to have a little girl here.”

Stephens stood still to hear ; making no reply, nor suffering any expression whatever to appear on his face.

That mute, impassive countenance was a relief to Mr. Smythe. He took courage, and went on with a tone of indifference.

“I don't know when she will come ; but she will live here for a time. Tell Mrs.

Ratcliffe a room or so will be wanted, and don't let me be bothered any more."

The last words had lost their tone of calm indifference. There was a tremulous, pathetic peevishness, that touched the heart of the attached servant.

He merely bowed, asked no questions, and left the room.

Mr. Smythe sighed a sigh of relief, rolled his troubles off, slept that night in peace, and dismissed the idea from his mind.

That their master would some day be taken in, was an idea which Mr. Smythe's servants had long entertained. That the time was come, was the idea they entertained on this occasion. Nevertheless, the stir and bustle of the preparation for, and the marvelling over, the event was not displeasing to them.

They made ready a room or so ; that is,

interpreting the order largely, they got ready the drawing floor, and the floor above, neither of which had been inhabited during Mr. Smythe's abode in the house. Good furniture which had stood safely stowed against the walls, was dragged out. A few pictures were hung, some Turkey carpets, old, yet good, were laid down, and the rooms presented a very tolerable appearance. All this was completed in a few days, and they then waited in patient curiosity for further disclosures.

A month passed away, and then Mr. Smythe observed to Stephens, in a voice of uncontrolled pettishness,

“The little girl will be here to-morrow. Have you got a room ready?”

Stephens bowed. “All ready, sir.”

“Tell Mrs. Ratcliffe she must put her to bed when she comes. I won't have anything to do with it.”

“No, sir.”

Nothing more passed, and from early dawn on the following day, Mrs. Ratcliffe, in her best cap, awaited the arrival. Whether a small child was to come in a bundle, or a little girl was to be deposited from a splendid coach, she had not a guess. From the expression that she was to be put to bed, she inclined to the first opinion.

Late in the evening a cab stopped at the door, and two women in deep mourning got out. Mrs. Ratcliffe anxiously inspected them, until one, in poor English, asked if this was Mr. Smythe's.

“*Voici donc,*” she said, pointing to the other. “Miss Maxwell.”

Mrs. Ratcliffe soon saw she had been mistaken in her anticipations; but she was a woman equal to all situations, and she addressed herself with respectful courtesy to

the young lady. She invited her to follow her, and as soon as she had led her to the drawing-room, where candles were lit, and a fire blazed, gave her a very proper message from her master. He could not see her that night, but he hoped she would make herself comfortable. And she then laid herself out to insure that she should be so ; with kind motherly ways leading the young stranger to express her wishes, and confide in her.

It did not seem a difficult task. Miss Maxwell was very soft and weak, and inclined to cling ; and Mrs. Ratcliffe's manners had the conscious dignity of her position. The young lady yielded easily to her kindness, and in an hour or two had acquired a friend. She told her of her father's death, and her sea-sickness ; and shed tears over both events. She told her that she had very few

real friends, and then directing her attention to a dreadful tear in her new crape, asked her advice about it. She said how kind it was of Mr. Smythe to have her, and she wondered whether he would think she had brought too many trunks.

To some persons her irrelevant discoursing might have seemed singular; but Mrs. Ratcliffe, though a wise woman in her way, was not given to severe scrutiny.

The young stranger was pretty, soft, childish, and confiding, and her heart was completely won. Whether or not her mind was of a high order, was a matter of indifference. She took her under her protection, and became bold in her behalf.

The following morning she presented herself before her lord, and stated her opinion that he ought to come and speak to his

charge. He sighed, but followed with docility. The appearance of the drawing-room into which she ushered him startled him; but again he sighed and resigned himself, feeling so it was ordained to be.

He walked shyly up to the young person, who rose from her seat to receive him; and with a movement of his hands behind him, as if to preclude the possibility of being shaken hands with, said,

“How d’ye do, my dear? Your poor father asked me to let you live here, and I am—ready to do it. But you can’t expect me to notice you much, for I am not used to the sort of thing.”

Here his voice fell into pathos.

“Oh! no, sir,” said the young lady, with great earnestness.

Her earnestness affected him, and he said with kindness,



“I beg you will make yourself comfortable. Ask Mrs. Ratcliffe for whatever you want, and she will give it you.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Good morning, my dear,” and he stood for a moment doubtful whether or no he should shake hands.

“I am so much obliged to you, sir, for having me,” the young lady then took courage to say; “and I *hope*,” she added, for this had weighed on her mind, “that you will not think I have brought too many trunks. I had so many pretty gowns, that it seemed a pity to leave them behind.”

Mrs. Ratcliffe had taken good care that no trunks should meet his eye; he was therefore quite unprepared for the appeal, and much touched by it.

“Oh! no, my dear; pray have as many trunks as you like. Good morning,” and he

held out a shy stiff hand in mark of approval and compassion.

He then hastened to his library, relieved himself with a deep sigh, and banishing the recollection of the inroad upon his peace, thought he had put away his troubles, and went to business.

But he little knew himself if he thought his troubles were put away. He could not rid himself of the remembrance that he was now a guardian. Compassion for the young stranger's desolate lot pursued him whenever he intermitted his attention to business. It even made him dream, a thing he usually scorned; and after two days he desired Stephens to send Mrs. Ratcliffe to him.

She came.

"How's the little girl?" he asked peevishly.

"Miss Maxwell is quite well, sir, and hopes you are quite well."

“You must get somebody, a governess, I suppose, to look after her. I suppose the poor thing will like to see the Tower and the British Museum, and she must have somebody, I suppose, to look after her.”

Mrs. Ratcliffe acquiesced, and was then desired to find a proper person.

She discharged her task with discretion. A widow lady was found, and for a week after she had inhabited the house Mr. Smythe was at peace. His ward was under the protection of a respectable matron. He might roll her off his mind; he might forget her existence.

But in one week Mrs. Rogers asked an interview, and the purport was the destruction of all his newly-acquired calm.

Mrs. Rogers had to report that a young man appeared to watch the comings and goings of Miss Maxwell; and had once had

the audacity to address her. Mrs. Rogers was a fussy person, and she made the most of her tale, and ended by a pathetic hint that she had not been treated with confidence, and a request to be told who the young man was.

“Hang me, Madam!” cried the astonished and irritated auditor of her wordy narrative, “how should I know?”

But it would not do. The words were no sooner said than his conscience pricked him with the recollection that this must be the very young man, as a protector against whom he had been invested with his office. He humbled himself to confess the fact; and having put Mrs. Rogers in possession of all he knew, and constituted her anew a duenna armed with authority, dismissed her and tried to be at peace.

But responsibility weighed upon him, and

when ten days afterwards he heard in a fresh interview that, although meetings could not take place, nosegays and other small presents were constantly sent, he roused himself up to consider the case, and act like a guardian and a man.

His determination was to institute inquiries about the young man; if he found him good, respectable, and willing to improve himself, to give him means of improvement, and, after telling his ward of her father's wishes and opinions, to allow the cousins to meet occasionally under his roof, as kinsfolk might. This plan, formed with considerable judgment, was, however, frustrated, for his inquiries were not satisfactorily answered.

Mr. Maxwell had given him a true report. The young man was the son of a small country dealer, and eight years before, being

a sharp-witted, brisk-looking lad, had been apprenticed by his aunt, Mrs. Maxwell, to a great London haberdasher, in whose house he still remained, receiving a good salary—in whose house, at least, he had remained, until the more advantageous speculation of winning his cousin had caused him to give it up.

His late master, when questioned by Mr. Smythe, owned that he had not a good opinion of him. He was too eager, he said, to make money, to allow himself to fall into irregular habits; but he certainly considered him a low-minded fellow, and one who could under no circumstances be a gentleman. He said he had trusted him to a certain degree, because he saw that to get on was the ruling passion of his mind; but as far as he had observed he had no other principle to guide him.

“ He’s a sharp, smart fellow, though,” he added, “ and is popular with many ladies who come to my establishment.”

These last words made Mr. Smythe the more uneasy, and his plan having failed, and unable to resolve upon any other, he was obliged to rely on the precautions taken by Mrs. Rogers, against the prosecutions of the young man’s suit.

For three months he led a life of misery. A week never passed without the demand of an interview, in which Mrs. Rogers detailed the persecutions which Miss Maxwell had endured during the week, and her counter-schemes to outwit the schemes of the young man. To her the affair was evidently not without enjoyment; but to him it was misery. He lived in hourly dread of his ward being carried off, and of the wound which would be made in his conscience,

should such an event happen, for ever.

At length on two successive days Mrs. Rogers brought into his study two letters, well-written, and almost pathetic in their complaints and protestations. These were from the young man to his cousin.

Mr. Smythe said but little, but when Mrs. Rogers left him on the second morning he came to a sudden resolution. He rang the bell, and desired Stephens to fetch Miss Maxwell.

Mr. Smythe's intercourse with his ward had been but slight. Every now and then, once or twice in a month, he forced himself to go up and ask her if she wanted anything, and to beg her to make any request she pleased. She generally thanked him, and said she was quite happy, and so the interview ended. On the last occasion she had said she had a great favour to ask. He, an-



ticipating a request for his sanction to her cousin's courtship, had gathered up his powers to argue or to withstand, but the request was less momentous.

“Would he be so good as to allow her to have a little bird?”

He stared at her in his surprise, and she hurried on—

“I promise you you shall not hear it sing. Mrs. Ratcliffe says it would annoy you to hear it sing; but indeed, sir, I would not annoy you for the world.”

“My poor little girl,” he said, patting her shoulder with a most unconscious expression of kindly feeling, “have as many birds as you please.”

Though their intercourse was slight, the terms of the ward and guardian were therefore such as were most to be desired. She trusted and respected him, and her awe had

nothing painful about it. She came to him on this occasion without trepidation, and stood patiently to hear his will.

“My dear,” he began in his peevish voice, “this state of things cannot go on. You must end it. You must marry somebody.”

“I would, sir, indeed, if I could,” she replied, “but I don’t know whom.”

“My dear, this state of things can’t go on. It will kill me if it does. You must marry somebody; and, as we have nobody else, it must be either your cousin or me. Now tell me which it shall be?”

“Oh! sir, I would much rather it were you;” and she seemed as little startled as if he had asked her to sit down.

“Very well, my dear, but only think well about it. I am a very old fellow, and your cousin is a young man.”

“But, sir, you are good and kind, and

you would always take care of me. I don't like my cousin, nor more did poor papa. If you please, sir, I would much rather marry you."

"Very well, my dear, then we had better set about it at once. Shall it be in a fortnight or so?"

"Whenever you please, sir."

"Then tell Mrs. Ratcliffe to get everything ready, and ask her for whatever you want."

"Thank you, sir."

"But, my dear," and here his voice put on its most pathetic and querulous tone, "you must not bother me much when we are married. I am not at all used to the sort of thing, and I can't be pestered with a wife all day long."

"Indeed, sir, I will always do just what you tell me," she said, with an earnestness equal to his own.

And this was the history of the marriage of the old bachelor Mr. Smythe, an event which caused a good deal of amusement and a good deal of dismay in the small world to which he belonged.

## CHAPTER II.

“OH! Simon, what do you think? Oh! good gracious, Simon, what *do* you think?”

These two exclamations were made at another breakfast, and were caused by another letter. They were made in a tone of simple wonder. No other feeling was mingled with it.

The Simon addressed was reading a newspaper, and without looking up he replied—

“I think nothing. You know I hate guessing. What is the row?”

A lady and gentleman were at breakfast in the small room of a villa near London. The room was bright from the large window that opened on the small garden, and everything in it was in decent order; but it was a tasteless room. The presiding genius of the room evidently did not care for pretty things. The lady was tolerably young, tolerably dressed, and tolerably good-looking, but like her room she was tasteless. A commonplace amiable woman, and nothing else. The man was different, but he shall not be described till his wife has spoken.

“Why, Simon, only think; here is a letter from Uncle Smythe, and what do you think he says? He is going to be married!”

There are moments in life when, in consequence of sudden temptation, secrets are revealed to men regarding the mysteries of

their own hearts. So, also, there are moments when, in consequence possibly of some slumbering passion awaking, a new expression comes out on a well-known countenance.

Before her husband answered her, commonplace and unobservant as Mrs. Devereux was, she saw a new something in *his* face, which, diverting her thoughts from her letter, made her say,

“Are you ill? What is the matter?”

“Give me that letter!” he said, shortly and sharply.

And she, mutely and wonderingly regarding him, obeyed.

He read it, and made no comment; but low and hissing through his teeth there came the sound of an oath.

The mind of Mrs. Devereux, which was not, as has been said, a large mind, which

could not easily pursue two trains of thought at once, was so occupied with her husband, that she sat regarding him with awe and surprise, unconscious of the connection between his new face and the fact announced in the letter. She was a tolerably good woman, good without thought, and the sound of an oath instinctively shocked her; on the other hand, she thought men were lords of the creation, and their privileges large; wrong was wrong, but if men did wrong that altered the case. *They* had privileges. The man her husband more than any.

His oath shocked her inward sense; but outwardly he alone occupied her. What could have given his face that strange expression; what could have disturbed his usual demeanour?

The usual demeanour of Mr. Devereux



was not particularly prepossessing, not at least in the eyes of any one but his wife; but he looked like a gentleman. There was nothing vulgar or coarse or unrefined in his air or manner; but there was nothing good and winning. His features and figure were not badly formed, but were cold and charmless. There was nothing to repel, but nothing to attract. Hitherto he had been a kind of negative man; calm, unattractive, and apparently passionless.

But on this day an expression had come into his calm face—had been suddenly born into it; and it was not a pleasant one. He sat reading and re-reading the letter with this new-born expression on his face, and his wife sat puzzling over it. At last a gleam of intelligence came to her.

“Are you thinking about Uncle Smythe’s marriage?” she asked.

He roused himself from his abstraction, folded up the letter, and returned it to her.

“What do you think of it, Simon?” she asked, varying her question.

“I think there is no doubt he is insane,” he said calmly.

“Do you? Poor old man! Do you know, Simon, that when Jane Ord heard of his taking that girl to live with him, she said something disagreeable would be sure to happen. I suppose she was thinking of this.”

“Hardly. No one, unless he, too, was insane, could have thought of such an event.”

“I suppose I must write and wish him joy,” she now said doubtfully.

“You may leave it to me,” he replied with a cold sneer. “I will go and wish him joy.”

Mrs. Devereux looked puzzled and frightened.

“Do you mean to tell Uncle Smythe that he is—that you don’t like his marriage?”

“I shall certainly give him my mind on the subject.”

“But oh! Simon, do you remember how angry he was about my settlement—with what you said, I mean?”

“I suppose, Letitia, I may be allowed to know my own business.”

“Oh! yes; certainly.”

“I consider it my duty as, through you, his nearest relation, to interfere; a duty to him, a duty to you, and a duty to those poor children.” And he glanced towards a little girl and a baby boy, who were on the floor in a corner of the room.

“Oh! yes,” his wife said admiringly.  
“You are always right.”

Mrs. Devereux was a great-niece of Mr. Smythe's. Her grandmother had been his half-sister, much older than himself. Both mother and grandmother had died, and she was his nearest relation. Although therefore the daughter of a poor man—a Captain Allen in the Navy—she had been considered a good speculation by one who was given to think of speculations even where his affections were concerned.

Mr. Devereux was the son of a gentleman of good family and good means. But the good means had been squandered, and when at seventeen Mr. Devereux had succeeded to his inheritance, he succeeded to debts and little else. His father had been fond of money, though he squandered it. He had squandered it in trying to make more of it; and he had imbued his son, not with a sense of the value of money, which is good, but

with the love of it, which is a different thing. At seventeen Simon Devereux was able to persuade those who acted for him to sell his property, and to give him by this means as large an income as was possible. He went to college and became a lawyer.

During his youth he lived a kind of negative life. Nobody liked him. Nobody disliked him. No one thought about him. He had no vices, and no virtues; no friends, and no enemies. He studied for the bar, and he also studied—with the small income that he had—the art of speculating wisely. He walked and talked like other men; but an undercurrent was always going on in his mind; how he could make a little money! His love for money was negative like his life. He did not love to hoard, nor love to spend. Everything about him was always proper and decent; not pretty nor

showy, nor yet spare or miserly. It was the love of money, pure and simple, without regard to consequences.

When he was nine-and-twenty he thought he would marry. He was beginning to have a little business, and this, joined to the small income, made him able to offer himself without shame. He looked about him for a suitable wife, and found Letitia Allen. She was humble and fortuneless, and therefore would be likely to be flattered by his notice; but she was great-niece to a rich merchant, and therefore a good speculation.

At the moment he chose her she was only a speculation. Captain Allen had offended Mr. Smythe by two things. First by his character, which was unsteady; and secondly, by asking, as a right, for the assistance which would otherwise have been

willingly given. Mr. Smythe and his half-sister had inherited from their father the same sum, not a very large one. The large fortune he possessed he had made by his own exertions, and he did not choose to be dictated to as to its disposal. On this point his mind had always been openly expressed. Notwithstanding which, Captain Allen had claimed his assistance to pay his debts as a *right*.

The assistance so claimed had been given. When he saw his distress, Mr. Smythe had been unable to refuse, but he had taken the opportunity once more to assert his freedom, and, as regarded Letitia Allen, to declare in positive terms that she was not, and should not be his heiress.

This declaration had been made some months before Simon Devereux became acquainted with Letitia ; but it was not talked

of, and he had courted her under the impression that she was, or was likely to be, an heiress.

When he had gained his point, and won the soft heart he had attacked, he found out his mistake. Now, there are very few monsters in human nature. The bad have some good, and the cold have some warmth. Simon Devereux had a hard, passionless nature; but still it was a human nature, and though he had begun to attack the soft heart without affection, a feeling of affection was, during the courtship, elicited. When he found out his mistake, he also found out a reluctance to give her up. This bias of inclination biassed his views; it made the speculation—though declared to be uncertain—appear a good and certain one in his eyes. He determined to stick to his bargain, and to marry Letitia Allen.



He had an immediate reward. Mr. Smythe was pleased with what he heard, and gave Miss Allen a wedding present of ten thousand pounds.

Instead, however, of being satisfied with this, the instantaneous concession made by the great-uncle enlarged the hopes and views of the lover. He thought the game was in his own hands, and having a high opinion of himself and his powers, he endeavoured to draw from Mr. Smythe some definite promises for the future—some tangible thing that could form a portion of the settlements.

Mr. Smythe was displeased and offended. An opportunity had been lost. Had Simon Devereux, bent on winning him, seen how to do it, it might have been done. He was pleased at the marriage of his great-niece. His mind was essentially just, and though

tenacious of his right and his freedom, he would have been glad to be able to like his relations. The family of the young man, and his own staid character, contrasted favourably with all that was known of Captain Allen ; and his choice of Letitia while under the ban of his displeasure made a favourable impression. It was a moment in which one who knew how to humour him might have wound a chord about him. But most men's characters are stronger than their perceptions. Many can act a part if they see a reason for it, but few can hold their characters at bay while they make discoveries how to act.

Simon Devereux did not see. He offended in the very same way that Captain Allen had done. Mr. Smythe, however, though he began to watch him, remained civil. He took a dislike to him, but he did

not give him up. His civility deceived. In spite of the determined refusal with which his request was met, Mr. Devereux thought he had got the best of it. He thought the way to manage him was to hold persistently and steadily before him the rights of relationship, to enthral him with the bond of kindred. On this opinion he had acted then, and he now was prepared to act again.

It was five years since his marriage, and they had been years of peace. A doubt of the success of his speculation had never crossed his brain. Looking on his wife as the means of obtaining enormous wealth, he had honoured her, and he waited in calmness for the happy time of prosperity to arrive. During these five years, the love of money had reposed in his breast. It did not sleep, for it now and then gave signs of life, and these

the keen sight of Mr. Smythe perceived ; but it reposed—the hope in the future fed it so fully, that it seldom bestirred itself. He lived a quiet, sober, respectable, negative life, doing nothing good, and doing apparently no evil. His wife admired and loved him ; saw with his eyes, and thought with his brain.

On this morning the old love arose from its long rest, and with it a violent feeling, almost a passion awoke in his calm breast—a hate to Mr. Smythe. Revenge for having deceived him ; hate for the deception. It came up very suddenly, and he was himself unconscious of its growth. He went, as he had intended, to express his feelings on the proposed marriage ; and he went as one who had a right to do so, and was determined to exercise his rights. Now, that the connections of an elderly man should be an-

noyed at a marriage to a very young girl, was but just and right. That they should fear for her happiness and his, and that they should wish to dissuade from a dangerous experiment, was but charitable.

That there should be disappointment in such a case, was also simply natural. The nearest relations of a rich elderly man can hardly help a hope that they or their children will benefit by his riches ; and though common discretion advises the conquest of such disappointment, the thing itself is almost inevitable.

When Mr. Devereux went on his errand to Mr. Smythe he might have so spoken as to prevent the evil he feared. A good word in due season is seldom altogether lost ; at all events it will not in the end offend a good nature. But men speak according to their characters ; and as there was no spark of

kindness or charity in the heart of Mr. Devereux towards his old relation, no spark of kindness came forth in his words. His speech, though studiously temperate in expression, was hard and insolent, grasping and selfish.

Mr. Smythe heard him with perfect patience. When all seemed to be said he addressed him in a tone strangely unlike his usual half-childish, peevish tone.

“Listen to me, Simon Devereux. If, as you say, you speak for my interest, let me inform you that I have ceased to be a child, and am not yet in my dotage. If, as I think, you speak for your own, let me inform you that you are in the wrong box. My money is my own, and with the very last sixpence of it I shall do as I, and only I, think proper. Now, good morning to you.”

Rage and mortification swelled in the breast of Simon Devereux, but he spoke without passion. A cold and withering sneer came over his lips, and he said,

“Some part of your speech I am disposed to doubt. *Some* men can understand advice when it is given. I have offered mine, and you have rejected it. It is as you will.”

“This much at least I have sense to understand. I understand *you*,” was the retort. “Enough of this. Leave me!” and they parted.

“What fools these mortals be!” says the sprite Ariel in the “*Tempest* ;” and certainly to a passionless spectator the folly of passion is often a marvel. To anyone but Mr. Devereux it would have been plain that he had, in familiar phrase, done for himself ; but it

was not so to him ; so far from it that he returned home exulting in the success of the scheme he was laying for the future. That Mr. Smythe was offended with him he did see, but this gave him little concern. He imagined that even in offending he was binding himself to him, and impressing his rights upon his mind.

“ Well, Simon,” asked his wife, eager for news on his return, “ did you congratulate Uncle Smythe ? ”

“ I did what I thought it right to do,” was his cold reply ; and she saw she was not to be satisfied.

After a moment she asked timidly if she had better call on Miss Maxwell, or rather putting it as a necessity if she had not better do it.

“ Call on Miss Maxwell ! ” he said severely. “ No, Letitia. I do not suppose Miss



Maxwell is a proper person for my wife to associate with."

"Mrs. Ratcliffe told me she was very amiable, though not very clever," she said, hesitatingly.

"If it is amiable and modest for a young woman to marry an insane old man for his money, then, I suppose, she is amiable. My views are different."

"Do you think Uncle Smythe is mad?" she asked, and she stared at him.

"Decidedly so."

"Poor old man!" And having so said, Mrs. Devereux resigned herself into her husband's hands. Had she consulted her own feeling, she would have said it was a pity; that it was not right, and even not wise to make divisions and quarrels in the family; but she never did consult her own feeling. Her husband was her conscience,

his eyes her eyes, his judgment her judgment; and so the matter rested, and no visit was paid.

## CHAPTER III.

“A LITTLE girl! Oh! goodness me!”  
This second exclamation was wrung from Mr. Smythe about a year after his marriage, at the announcement of an unexpected, yet not astonishing event. A smiling doctor entered his library, and congratulated him on being the father of a young daughter. Dim visions of the possible occurrence of such an event had of late once or twice floated before his eyes, but he had banished manfully the horrible thought, and the announcement did truly take him by surprise. His wife had been too timid, Mrs.

Ratcliffe too knowing, to mention it. His housekeeper knew him well—knew that the dread of the anxiety and trouble consequent on such an arrival in his quiet abode might drive him mad ; but that if all was taken calmly, he might be reconciled to it. She therefore took upon herself the arrangement of the affair in its minutest particulars ; and it so chanced that, until the event was safely and happily over, no reference to him was needed.

It was an hour or two before dinner, while engaged with some intricate business, that the news was borne to him, and that he thus expressed himself.

“Yes, sir ; a young lady is, I fear, on her first arrival, generally a disappointment ; but no doubt it will be a son next time.”

Mr. Smythe put on his sourest face, and made no reply. After assuring him that

both mother and child were perfectly well, the doctor withdrew ; having indeed been instructed so to behave himself by Mrs. Ratcliffe.

As soon as he had disappeared, Mr. Smythe, with a kind of dogged determination not to be a father, say what they might, re-seated himself at his table, and endeavoured to give his mind to his business. But he was not left in peace. Mrs. Ratcliffe appeared, and told him it was customary for a good husband to visit his wife on such an occasion, and she thought Mrs. Smythe would not rest easy until she had heard that he was pleased with the baby. The conscience of the poor husband was now touched, and with a look of abject misery he placed himself in the hands of his housekeeper, and prepared to do her bidding. She conducted him to his wife's

bedroom, where she lay, pretty and peaceful and happy, with her baby beside her. It was an emergency for which he was totally unfitted, but his kind heart prompted him how to act.

“So that is the little girl!” he exclaimed; “well, my dear, it seems a very nice little thing, and I hope it will be a comfort to you.”

He patted the hand that lay on the child, and by that means appeared to take the child also under his protection, and the trusting young mother was satisfied.

“Thank you, sir,” she said gently; “and indeed it shall never be a trouble to you.”

“No, no, my dear, of course it won't. And now rest easy and get well. Good night.” He patted her hand again, and returned to his solitude. His conscience was easy; his house seemed peaceful and quiet,

and he drove away all anxious thoughts and vexations from his mind.

The marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Smythe had been a very peaceful one. She had obeyed him, and had made it the study of her life not to bother him; to submit to all his whims and wishes, to refrain from any intrusion on the solitude he loved. At the same time she trusted him entirely, and if she had a desire for anything which required his permission to obtain, she fearlessly asked it. For smaller things she placed herself in the hands of Mrs. Ratcliffe, and her mind was so constituted, that with these two authorities to guide her, and with birds and flowers to occupy her, she was happy. Now that a child was come, happiness would be complete.

And Mr. Smythe, too, had been at peace. After the cares of guardianship, the care of

a submissive young wife had made a great calm in his mind. One or two decided steps he took, such as, to his views, were incumbent on every husband, viz., dining in company with his wife, and walking with her to church on a Sunday; but with these, and a very few other exceptions, he lived his old solitary life, and resumed his old peace of mind. The dining in company instead of alone had cost him a struggle, but the conscience of the husband insisted on the sacrifice being made, and it was done. A solitary evening and a solitary breakfast were still permitted, and on the whole he had lived as tranquil a life with his wife as he had done without her.

Shortly after his marriage that implacable enemy of his, his conscience, had suggested to him that the young man whom he had baffled was now a connection of his own, and



ought to be looked after. This worried him for a time. At last he proposed to his wife to receive him, and be kind to him. But she expressed so decided an aversion and disinclination to his society, that he thankfully put aside the idea of cultivating his acquaintance. He sent for him, however, and told him he wished to befriend him, and help him, if he so pleased, upward in life; finally offering to procure for him a clerkship in a counting-house. The young man, James Field by name, sullen and mortified by disappointment, would not be touched by his kindness, but was at the same time willing to profit by it. His master had said truly that he never could be a gentleman, and so Mr. Smythe perceived. Having procured for him, therefore, a place suited to his abilities, and in which diligence and good conduct would be sure to advance him, he

felt satisfied; and this care was banished with the rest of the cares that had led to his marriage.

On this peaceful life the prospect of the cares of a family now broke. In vain was his determination to ignore the event that had occurred; in vain his resolution to keep himself aloof from nurses and a nursery. Mrs. Ratcliffe's words that his wife would not rest easy unless she thought he was pleased with the baby, were a perpetual thorn in his couch, a hoarse whisper in his ear. They forced his legs up twice a day to his wife's room; and when there, forced him to act a kindly and fatherly part, patting her hand, and patting the bundle of linen which generally lay by her side.

But all he did was done as a matter of duty. In many men the fatherly instincts

awake in the mere fact of possessing a child. But it was not so with him. He had relieved his conscience by taking under his protection, as best he could, the weak being entrusted to his care ; but he remained the same man, loving only his own solitary business—forced into kindness only by the inexorable heart within.

Towards the end of the month of his wife's seclusion, he went one morning to pay his visit, and found her up and well, with a real baby, and no longer a bundle on her knee. She was looking very pretty in her invalid costume, and the tenderness with which she bent over the child gave an interesting cast to her impassive and inexpressive countenance. Most people would have admired the picture of maternal love ; but Mr. Smythe had no eye for beauty. He groaned in his inward man as he pictured to

himself the days to come, when day by day, and week after week, he should be expected to notice the baby.

He sat down, however, and composed himself to do what was necessary on this occasion ; said he was glad to see her so well, and observed that her child was growing fast.

He then asked her if she had anything she wanted, and a few other customary questions, and then patting her shoulder, and the arm of the baby, he rose up.

But she arrested him timidly.

“ Oh ! sir, could you sit down for a minute ? I want very much to speak to you.”

He sighed and sat down.

“ Anything you like, my dear.”

“ It is about the baby. I suppose it must have a name.”

“I suppose it must. I had forgotten that. What shall you call her?”

“I want you to help me, sir. There are two names I want to have, and I cannot decide which I like best.”

She spoke in a tone of childish vexation and perplexity.

“Oh! well, my dear, let me choose,” he said kindly.

“One is Pamela,” she said, “and the other is Clarissa.”

“Pamela and Clarissa!” and his shaggy brows seemed to shake as he knit them. “No, indeed, no child of mine shall ever bear such names as those. Let us have a decent Christian name, and be content.”

She trembled, and opened wide her eyes.

“What is your name, my dear?”

“Only Ann, sir.”

“A very good name. My mother’s name,

too, was Ann. Let the child be called Ann."

"Oh! sir." And a large tear fell from each eye.

But he was inexorable.

"I will have her called Ann, my dear, and nothing else," he said sternly, and he left the room.

He did not mean to be unkind to his wife. His view was to secure to his daughter a decent Christian name, and his conscience made him no reproaches.

The following morning Mrs. Ratcliffe knocked at his door. For the sake of her docile young mistress she was always bold. She came to tell him that Mrs. Smythe had had a restless night, and was not very well; and she feared it was owing to the fact that she had fretted a good bit, poor thing, about her child's name.

“Could not——”

But here her master interrupted her. He was an obstinate man, and a fit of righteous obstinacy was now upon him.

“The little girl shall be called Ann,” he said, pressing his thin lips together. “Don’t let me be bothered any more.”

Mrs. Ratcliffe disappeared, and he remained with his obstinacy. He carried it about triumphantly all the day, but when in the evening he visited his wife, and saw her pale cheeks and red eyes, it began to melt in his heart. He almost hoped she would attack him on the subject, but she did not. She was too timid to say more.

The next morning, however, the strife recommenced. Mrs. Ratcliffe again entered his room, and this time with a big book—a kind of dictionary of names. She said she had been trying to make out a name that

would please both parents, and she had found one with which her mistress was quite delighted—Annora. She could be Ann to her father and at home, if he pleased, but she would be something prettier than Ann to the world.

Obstinacy seized Mr. Smythe as she spoke. His senses shivered and quivered at the idea of possessing a daughter Annora. He pressed his lips together, and was about to repeat that the little girl should be called Ann, and nothing else, when his tyrant conscience gave him such a sudden stab that he quailed under it. He saw a vision of the timid wife with her pale cheeks and red eyes, and he melted.

“Poor little fool!” he said bitterly. “Get along, Mrs. Ratcliffe, and let her have the name she pleases.”

Thus it was settled, and thus the child



was baptized. It was the only matrimonial strife in which the fatherly husband and childlike wife were ever engaged. The little Annora was baptized, but her father did not think it necessary to attend her baptism. She lived and grew, was short-coated, and cut her teeth, and still he paid her no attention. She was, as all who saw her said, a fine handsome child, the image of himself; but his likeness made no impression on his heart. He returned to his old life, dining with his wife, and walking with her to church on a Sunday; and sometimes, when he found the child on her knee, patting it for her sake, but he took no interest in it.

Mrs. Smythe was very happy with her baby, and if she did sometimes wish that he would notice how much it was grown, she remembered her promise not to bother him, and restrained her wishes. But there was

one person who was not grateful. The head nurse, who received very high wages, was quite unused to such treatment of her charges. She felt it was incumbent on her to vanquish this cold-hearted father, and she set herself to the task. Who could tell what might happen if he did not take to the child? Why, he might will all his money away, and go and die, and where should they all be? She watched his movements, met him on the stairs, met him in the streets, and on every occasion flourished the child in his view; but all in vain. He passed on with his own thoughts, and took no heed to nurse or baby.

At length the first anniversary of the birth of a Miss Smythe came round. On the morning of that day the nurse washed her with extra care, put on the very best of best frocks, blue bows on her shoulders, and the

most exquisite blue kid shoes on her tiny feet. No baby had ever seemed more able to soften an obdurate heart.

Bearing her in her arms, and entering the room of her master with the air of a princess, the nurse approached him.

“Miss Smythe is a year old, sir, to-day. I thought you would be expecting to see her.” Not quite the truth.

But vain were her efforts; vain the blue sash, and even the blue kid shoes. For a moment the old man was dismayed, and looked up bashfully from his breakfast; but the next moment he felt “now or never.”

“I am glad to see the little girl is well,” he said; “but you may take her away, and I will ring when I want her.”

The nurse was in her turn abashed; but she also recovered herself.

“Thank you, sir,” she replied, with pre-

sence of mind. "Now, my dear, say 'bye-bye' to your papa," and she raised the child, and held it in an attitude towards him.

In some mute expectation of hearing "bye-bye" from those infant lips, he gazed up in wonder. No "bye-bye" came, but the child, as if instinctively attracted by the kind heart that was hid under that ungainly face, stretched out towards him her little fat arms and smiled. A thrill shivered through his frame, a strange feeling of paternal love leaped into his heart; he half rose from his seat to gratify it. Then he composed himself, and though he did slowly rise, he spoke gravely.

"She's a nice little girl," and he softly patted her arm; "but you may take her away now, and I will send when I want her."

The nurse did not quite understand. She

had not seen the smile which had achieved the conquest of his heart, and uncertain whether or not the conquest was achieved, she withdrew. But she guessed it before long. Mr. Smythe would not acknowledge, even to himself, that he pined and thirsted to have those fat arms round his neck ; but it was the case, and he plotted for that gratification with deep-laid schemes. He began to note the hours of the day when she took her walks. Sometimes concealed behind his door, and sometimes concealed at the end of the street, he would watch for her coming forth, and would go forward to meet her. He would then stop and pat her, receive the smile, and pass on, still plotting for other days, when the moment for receiving her into his arms might naturally come. It was some weeks before it came, but when it came the victory was complete. From

the day when first she took her place on his knee, she ruled over him with absolute power, and gradually transformed his crusty attentions into a soft and benign tenderness.

## CHAPTER IV.

IT is not to be supposed that Mr. Deve-reux had received calmly the news of the arrival of a young heiress. The matter had been kept so close that it burst upon him with a surprise as great as that which it had caused to Mr. Smythe, and the surprise overwhelmed him. He was a man who, though with a hard, unimaginative mind, always believed what he chose to believe. He had decided that there would be no Master or Miss Smythe, and having so decided, he had felt little anxiety on the sub-

ject. He had made his plans for dealing with a mad old man and a silly young wife, and having made his plans he rested.

The arrival of a child upset his plans. Will or no will, no one could say that a child was not the nearest of kin to its own father. He was unable to form his plans for the future, and his mind became tossed with passion. The only settled plan he could form was, that the child should die; not die by his plotting, he was not bad enough for that; but that it must and should die. It was a hateful intruder in the world, and it was no doubt intended to die. His mind prone, as was said, to believe what it wished, shortly began to believe this. The agreeable subject of his daily wishes was the death of an infant, and by means of wishes he began to be convinced it would be so.



Meanwhile the child lived and grew, and no tales of its unhealthiness were heard.

No communication had ever taken place between the families. In sundry disagreeable ways Mr. Devereux managed to keep himself and his rights in Mr. Smythe's mind; but he allowed no visiting. When Mrs. Smythe was confined, a maternal fellow-feeling had drawn from Mrs. Devereux an expression of a wish to make her acquaintance and see the baby. But it had been received with a negative so fierce and savage that she yielded at once. No doubt Simon had his good reasons.

When Annora was nearly a year old, she one day met Mrs. Ratcliffe. The Devereuxs lived beyond Kensington, and Mrs. Ratcliffe had been on a visit to a sick relation in the same quarter. She was walking along the road to find an omnibus, and Mrs. De-

vereux was taking a walk with her two children.

Mrs. Ratcliffe and Letitia Allen had been good friends before, and friends in a degree after Letitia's marriage. She had, however, so resented the neglect of Mrs. Smythe that of late the friendship had lapsed into a quiet enmity. Mrs. Devereux neglected Mrs. Smythe, and she in return neglected Mrs. Devereux. When, however, she saw her leading a fine little boy by the hand, her enmity for the moment ceased. She could not resist stopping to ask her how she did, and begging for a kiss from the fine little boy.

Poor Letitia had felt no enmity. She had not indeed a heart strong enough to nourish any strong passion ; and though, in obedience to her husband, it liked and disliked at his pleasure, they were mild sensations, liable

to be upset at the very least temptation. She forgot all about the strife, and turned and walked and talked with Mrs. Ratcliffe; easing her mind of many anxious questions regarding the health of Mrs. and Miss Smythe.

Mrs. Ratcliffe had too much wisdom and dignity to enter on unpleasant topics. She made no allusion to the coolness that had taken place, but, when she went home, observed to Mrs. Smythe that it was no fault of Mrs. Devereux's that she did not call; and expatiating on the charms of the boy, stirred up her young mistress to interest and curiosity concerning him. He was, she explained to her, between three and four years old, and had "such a sweet, rosy, mischievous face, she should have liked to have cooked and eaten him on the spot."

Mrs. Smythe was much excited, and in-

quired whether she thought she might send him a present. Most christianly anxious to appease strifes, Mrs. Ratcliffe encouraged the idea, and they went together to the Soho Bazaar, from whence a large and handsome cart and team of horses, the cart full of sacks, were despatched to the villa beyond Kensington. It was addressed—

*“For Mr. Henry Devereux,  
With Miss Smythe’s love.”*

This was a master-stroke of policy. Mrs. Ratcliffe could read the bad feelings which Mr. Devereux entertained towards Mrs. Smythe both in his conduct and his countenance; but the poor little innocent baby was, she supposed, for the present at least, an innocent object in his eyes.

When Mr. Devereux came down to dinner on the evening after the arrival of the pres-

ent, his children, as was generally the case, for he dined early, were brought down and sat in a corner. When he was in a good temper he liked them to be there, for he was fond of his children in a certain way; and if he was in a bad temper, he liked them to be there, as it gave him more opportunities of finding fault with his submissive wife than he might otherwise have found. Of late he had indeed always been in a bad temper. The gnawing hate he felt to the unwelcome child left no peace in his heart. But even a bad temper has its variations. There are no good days perhaps, but there are very bad days and moderate days. This was a moderate day. Shortly before his arrival at home he had forced a tradesman who demurred to give him discount on a bill, and this had produced a certain glow of satisfaction. Instead there-

fore of saying, "What a row these children make!—hush! hush! hush!" he observed, when dinner was about half concluded, "What has happened to Letitia's tongue to-day?"

There were certainly other reasons besides moderation of temper that called for this observation. For the last ten minutes the children had not been quiet only, they had been dumb. Intense curiosity regarding the contents of the sacks possessed them, and one armed with a rusty nail, the other with a large crooked yellow pin, were hacking away at the seams and necks of the sacks. But at the very moment he spoke, the quiet was broken. Letitia was nearly five years old, and her crooked pin, though a feeble instrument, had at last produced an effect. A drop of bran, like a drop of blood, began to ooze out of a hole in the

seam. Henry screamed with joy, and attempted to gain possession of Letitia's sack. Mr. Devereux looked at his wife, to inquire what was going on.

Now Mrs. Devereux had fully intended to tell her husband what had occurred ; she had been thinking of it ever since he returned home, and was only watching for a favourable opportunity. Nevertheless, there was a slight blush on her cheek as she said, "It is rather a long story ; I was going to tell you, Simon."

The fact was, when the present arrived, she and her children had been so enraptured with its appearance, that, forgetting the strife and her husband's probable displeasure, they had all sat upon the floor to unpack and enjoy it. Afterwards a fear had arisen that she ought to have awaited his consent to receive it ; and though she said

to herself, "From the baby he cannot mind," she was perfectly aware that it was at the best a doubtful matter.

Mr. Devereux saw the blush and guessed a cause. He waited with cold staring eyes to hear the long story ; and it was given, haltingly, hesitatingly, apologetically, and diffusely.

Then he rang the bell.

"Bring back the wrappers of the parcel that arrived this afternoon," he said sternly. He was obeyed. A number of sheets of brown paper were brought into the room. "That will do," he said, and the servant went. "Now pack it up," he said to his wife.

Mrs. Devereux rose. She saw he was angry, angry in his worst manner—coldly, sternly angry ; but she did not blame him. She felt how wrong she had been. Desirous



to do her best, she now coaxed the children into assisting her, by saying she was going to put the cart to bed.

“No, it is not going to bed,” thundered out her husband. “It is going away for good.”

The children looked at him. They were too much awed to cry; and Mrs. Devereux hastily finished the packing while they sat staring at their father. It was only when it was fairly hidden, and the cord was being tied, that little Henry recovered his self-possession. When he did recover it he laid his fat hand on the parcel, clenched his teeth, and shouted,

“It’s mine, and it shan’t go away!”

“Set it down, sir!” again thundered out the father, and again the children were awed into staring wonder.

After a moment Mr. Devereux spoke

again, and this time coldly and calmly—

“Listen to me,” he said. “That parcel was sent by a person who has no right to send it. She is your enemy. She has robbed you—*robbed you*; mind what I say. She must not pretend to love you, and you must not love her.”

The children were young, but they were excited at this explanation. The little girl, a sharp-featured, forward child, with a great deal of her father in her face, came towards the table, and asked pertly,

“Shall I hate her?”

“You may. You have good right. I hate her because she has robbed *you*.”

“I hate her!” said the child, with emphasis.

The little boy now approached, and put his chin on the table.

“ And *I* hate her,” he said.

Though the childish face was “ sweet, rosy and mischievous,” his cheeks flashed and his eyes kindled as he spoke ; an innate consciousness that he was doing wrong made the words delightful to him, and he spoke them with heart-felt savageness.

Mrs. Devereux looked at her husband. She could hardly think this was a right education. She could hardly think this was a picture of Christian principles. She expected some word of disapprobation ; but no such came.

“ That will do,” he said. “ Remember. And now go to bed.”

It was some minutes before she could gather her senses sufficiently to summon her usual principle of guidance to her aid. When she did so, and had mentally observed “ that

Simon must know best," she sighed a short, unwonted sigh, and then banished the subject from her mind.

## CHAPTER V.

FOR three years Annora reigned empress over her father's heart, and then he died—caught cold and died, after two days' illness. He was a strange, eccentric being, but he had been loved, and he was mourned. By his servants bitterly, by his little daughter passionately, by his wife as deeply as her nature could mourn for anything. She had looked forward to living many years under his protection, and she wept when she found herself unprotected. She was only three-and-twenty, and Annora was little more than four years old. She wondered how they

ever should struggle through mortal life alone.

The news of the death of Mr. Smythe, while the child had chosen to live, stirred Mr. Devereux into a storm of agitation. There was a pause of a few days, and then the grand question, the will, was made known. It was a very simple one. There were many small bequests to servants and persons who now first appeared as dependent on his charity. There were two or three large bequests to hospitals. There was a legacy of £25,000 to Henry Devereux at his mother's death, the interest to be paid to her during her life; and the whole of the rest of his property was left to his daughter. It was left in the hands of guardians until she attained the age of sixteen, and then was to be solely and absolutely at her own disposal. His wife had been provided for

in a settlement made after their hurried marriage, and to her he only left a gold box, "as a mark of gratitude for her constant obedience to his wishes."

This was the will. It was dated six months before the day of his death.

Mr. Devereux was paralysed. His worst anticipations had never pictured anything like this. He had made sure of a large legacy to Letitia. Those rights which he had asserted so constantly seemed to secure this at the least. It was a blow not only to his ingrained love of money, but a blow to his daily life. He was not a hoarder. His love of money was not of that nature. He wished to have it, and to increase it: he liked to give his time and thought to it, making innumerable small speculations. He wanted money for his life, for his increasing family; he wanted money—money!

He had made sure of it, and the prospect was suddenly clouded. The promised riches had taken wings and flown away. His original plan had been to dispute the will on the ground of his uncle's insanity at the time of his marriage. Annora's birth had upset this hope; for even though mad, there was the child with her rights as nearest of kin. She was a fact which no one could gainsay. After the first paralysing blow, however, this plan, somewhat modified, revived again. There were new circumstances to deal with. It appeared that there were several wills—wills made on different occasions for ten years back, and they were not all as unfavourable to the rights of Letitia Allen as the last.

Careful and methodical as Mr. Smythe had been in most things, he had not been very careful of his wills. He would make a will, and have it witnessed, and put it



away, either in his own library or at his lawyer's office, and there it would remain undestroyed till a new will came to bear it company. And these wills were seen by some of the young men about the lawyer's office, and so it was that the fact of the many wills became known to Simon Devereux, and that he became possessed of copies of some of them.

It would be tedious to detail all the provisions of these wills. Suffice it to say that there were four wills before his marriage, in which, although the sum greatly varied, and gradually decreased, Letitia was liberally provided for. In the first of these wills the name of Mr. Devereux was associated with that of his wife; in the others the eldest son took the place of the father, who was mentioned no more. There was another peculiarity in these wills, which was

that the sum gradually taken from Letitia was given to the payment of the National Debt.

A month after the marriage of Mr. Smythe there was a new will. Mrs. Smythe was not mentioned. (He had already provided for her by purchasing an annuity of a thousand a year. This he had done in the hopes of securing her comfort, and protecting her from the burden of wealth, when there were no brains to bear it.) To Letitia Devereux he left £30,000, to her eldest son £50,000. The whole of the rest of his property, "in the event of my death without a child," was left to charities, or to the payment of the National Debt.

During the four following years, however, it was evident that the conduct of the Devereux family had affected the mind of Mr. Smythe regarding them, and thence the re-

duction of the legacy in the last will to the simple £25,000 left to Henry. It was not only the birth of his child. The wills contained a kind of biographical notice of the feelings of the great-uncle regarding his relations. In the scales of his just mind they had been tried and found wanting.

It was after mastering all the wills, and noting all their peculiarities, that Mr. Deveaux at length determined on a course. He rejected all the wills made before Mr. Smythe's marriage, and took his stand on the one made in the month of his marriage. The last will of all he rejected on the ground of insanity. It was with a bitter pang that the first wills were resigned, but while £25,000 was as nothing, £80,000 would be something to secure, and he saw his way to the securing of this.

Shortly after the death of Mr. Smythe,

therefore, notice was given that the will would be disputed, and Mr. Devereux and his lawyers applied their minds to make out the case. It is not necessary here to state the case that was made out. It is enough to say that it was well done—that the proofs of insanity were, to say the least, plausible. Many months were consumed in working out the evidence, and then the trial came.

Mr. Devereux had an assistant, who helped him with a malignity almost equal to his own. It was James Field, the young clerk, the haberdasher's apprentice, who conceived that he had been outwitted. He had evidence to give regarding a variety of interviews that had taken place between him and his late benefactor (for such Mr. Smythe had showed himself), and there had been at all times sufficient eccentricity in the

strange old being for a malignant imagination to draw such a conclusion.

The ground, however, on which Mr. Devereux built his case was in proving how, up to a certain moment, the old man's thoughts had constantly recurred to his niece, Letitia Allen ; that as long, in fact, as he had his senses, he had acknowledged her claims.

The mind of Mrs. Smythe was not strong, but it laid tenaciously hold of impressions. The facts of the different wills were beyond her grasp ; but this one thing she understood, that Mr. Smythe had left everything to his daughter, and that wicked people were trying to deprive her of her fortune. That in any case Annora would be a great heiress, she did not realize. She pictured wealth or penniless poverty, and she wept daily over the horrible prospect.

Mrs. Ratcliffe shared her feelings on this point. She had the brains, indeed, to distinguish, but not the will to do it. It was all or nothing with her, and she was determined to stand to Annora's rights to the death. Her respect for her master prompted the same feeling. She was too angry to weep over the attack on the will, but she shed many tears over the insult to his memory occasioned by the trial.

And, to do her justice, her evidence to his sanity was very convincing. She had all her wits about her, and spoke with such an air of calm conviction that the impression made on the judge and jury was lasting and strong.

The verdict was given in favour of Annora, and Mr. Devereux was defeated.

The blow was again paralyzing, for he had made sure of a contrary result. There

remained to him nothing now but to wish for the death of that child who stood between him and his rights; between him and his hopes; between him and money. And having no remaining hope but this, into this he cast the whole energy of his nature. To speculate on the difference the snapping of one frail link would make to him and his, became the sole subject of his unoccupied hours, and he pictured that difference, pictured his condition under those desired circumstances so vividly, that the conviction that the picture would be a reality became the rooted and settled conviction of his brain. Meanwhile he allowed himself a slight revenge.

Mrs. Smythe was much relieved by the favourable verdict. Unlike Mr. Devereux, she had feared a contrary result. She had almost persuaded herself that her poor hus-

band was insane ; would have been quite persuaded of the fact had not Mrs. Ratcliffe so boldly stood to the contrary. It was a relief in every way. It was a relief that Annora was not to be a pauper, and it was a relief to be assured that she had not married a madman. She had a short time of peace, and then a new trouble began.

Mr. Devereux caused an idea to be planted in her mind, which became, indeed, like a thorn in the flesh. It was this : that there was a possibility of his stealing Annora, and making away with her. Not that such a purpose ever crossed his mind. He was not boldly bad enough for that. But it was a pleasure to him to murder her peace by this dread. From the moment the suggestion was made, it took complete possession of her mind ; and though Mrs. Ratcliffe argued with her fears, she, too, had a latent



dread that Mr. Devereux might be capable even of this.

Her cousin the clerk cast his sting also into her weak mind. Among the words of advice given by her dying husband had been, "Don't marry James Field, my dear ;" and she had answered with eager protestations. But the warning was not needed. Weak minds often have an instinct to warn them who they may trust. It is but an instinct, and a clever man may overcome it ; but it is a help ; and that instinct Mrs. Smythe had opposed to the claims of her cousin. She disliked him as much as was in her nature, but dreaded his marrying her still more.

Now, like Mr. Devereux, his suggestion was only a revenge. He wished to torment, not to marry her. Her circumstances were different from what they had been, and he was unwilling to connect himself with the mother

of a great heiress—one left to the guardianship of two honest, quick-sighted men. He was as keen-sighted as ever to his own interests, but these circumstances did not entice him. He made her, however, as much afraid of being stolen herself, as she already feared the robbery of her child; and the poor thing's life was poisoned.

Mrs. Ratcliffe decided on removing into the country. To this her mistress made some objection. She liked the society of doctors. It was a pleasure to her to be visited by her physician, and to pour into his great mind her small griefs. It was a still greater pleasure to show Annora to her apothecary, and to be assured that the child was finer than the rest of her species. On this score her objections to move from the house where she had taken root were strong. In the end, however, they were overruled, and a

pretty house was taken in a distant county. To this place they removed, and there the persecutors left them in peace. Both were London men, and soon wearied of the objectless revenge.

After they had been a year or two in the country, the guardians wrote to say that if Mrs. Smythe was looking out for a governess, which they supposed was necessary for Annora, they had one to recommend.

Though injured by the suggestion, Mrs. Smythe acquiesced, and when a young person arrived, submitted herself quietly to her guidance. The young person did not approve of the solitude of the country, and soon began to speak of masters. As London was out of the question, Mrs. Smythe consented to the suggestion that they should go abroad; and they went first to Brussels,

then to different towns in Switzerland, settling finally at Geneva when Annora was about thirteen.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE education of Annora was not conducted on the most approved plans. She had four persons devoted to her service, bidding for her favour, and competing with each other in making her a princess. Her nurse attended to her body, her governess to her mind; her mother was her play-fellow, and Mrs. Ratcliffe her friend. With a quick intellect and a strong will she soon learned how to manage them all as she pleased.

With these four persons she passed the greater part of her time. Occasionally young

companions were met with ; but as the deference exacted at home was not as cheerfully paid abroad, Annora made little effort to secure their affections.

Neither her nurse nor her governess was blest with brains. They each did their duty, but they exercised no influence on the mind. Mrs. Smythe had no brains at all, and had it not been for Mrs. Ratcliffe, Annora's case would have been a hard one. Mrs. Ratcliffe, however, although uneducated, and although as conscientiously bent on doing her duty to her late master by spoiling his child as the rest of the house, was gifted not only with good sense, but with a religious mind. Her conversation was imbued with these two properties—a natural wisdom and a more than natural sense of the importance of heavenly things ; and they fell on the young mind that clung to

her, and sowed in the soil many a good seed.

The guardians of the little girl made occasional inquiries after her welfare, but it was not till she was eleven years old that she began to be a person in their eyes. At that age a reference was made to them by her desire. At that age Annora and her mother began to disagree. So long as her child was satisfied to play, and could be amused with games and annals of the lives and deaths of canary birds and bullfinches, the mother and daughter amused themselves together ; but Annora had a quick intellect, and no sooner did she begin to exercise it freely than she began to feel her mother's deficiencies. She found that she could silence her in an argument, that she could make her cry by teasing, that she understood nothing of the questions that occupied

her precocious intellect. The child used her power in general mercifully, but when she was set on a whim she knew how to obtain her purpose.

In her alarm at losing her authority, a thing very dear to a weak mind, Mrs. Smythe put forward the guardians, and, whenever she could not rule her child, threatened her with them. For a time the plan succeeded, but at eleven Annora began to wish to rule her guardians also. It was an exciting idea, and at length, to her mother's surprise, on an occasion of disagreement a reference to them was proposed. The disagreement was regarding her name. Annora took a dislike to it, and one day perplexed her mother by asking her why she gave it? Mrs. Smythe did not wish to tell. She beat about the bush, saying people must have some name, and other wise observations; but as these



were not accepted, at last said, peevishly,

“I am sure I hope you are not going to be like your poor father.”

“Why, mamma, did *he* not like it?” For the little girl could put two and two together; and, with tears in her eyes, her mother was then forced to make a full confession. “And what did he want me to be?” Annora said, resolvedly. “I should like to be his name.”

“He wanted you to be Ann,” whimpered the poor mother; “but I tell you, if you make yourself Ann, you will break my heart.”

Annora’s face became very long. She did not like Ann. She felt abashed and conquered. After a short reflection, however, her ready wit helped her.

“Ann is half my name, mamma?”

Her mother nodded.

“Then I will be like papa, and have half. I will take Nora, and,” with determination, “henceforward I will be Nora, and nothing else.”

It was on this point that a reference to the guardians was made. Mrs. Smythe thought even the Queen could not permit a change of name, and Mrs. Ratcliffe had serious doubt whether it would not imperil the property. But no assurances that it was dangerous to tamper with names would satisfy the young lady, who, the more she was opposed, became the more resolute on the subject. She desired her mother to write and ask permission of her guardians, and, had they refused to sanction the change, would probably have appealed to the Queen in person. The guardians, however, gave free permission for Annora to do as she pleased, observing only that it might some-

times be necessary for her to sign with the larger name. This gave her a very exalted opinion of their capacity, and she determined to make the Mr. Fanshawe who had written her friend.

In two years she had occasion to trouble them again.

When they arrived at Geneva, the governess who had hitherto instructed Nora left her to be married. She had done her duty, as was said, tolerably well, but she had failed to obtain influence over her pupil; and such being the case, instruction had proved tedious. Nora wished to learn, but only when and as she pleased. She therefore now announced her intention to do without a governess.

Mrs. Smythe was paralyzed, Mrs. Ratcliffe dismayed. The guardians were threatened. At the first word, Nora took the

affair into her own heads, and wrote a letter of appeal to Mr. Fanshawe.

He laughed heartily when he received her letter, and said she was quite right; a governess was a bore. Nevertheless, mindful of his duty, he wrote a letter of persuasive good sense on the subject.

To this Nora replied:—

“MY DEAR GUARDIAN,

“I liked your letter very much. Perhaps it would be good for most people to do as you say. But it will not be good for me. Governesses wish to be submitted to and obeyed. I suppose it is right for them to wish it; but I can't submit. It would be no use for me to promise to do it, because I *can't*. I should like very much to talk to you, and I know I should persuade you; but I don't like to trouble you with a

long letter, because, of course, you are busy. I must only ask you, therefore, to trust me that I know what is best when I say a governess will not be good for *me*. I will have as many masters as mamma pleases, but I *cannot* consent to have a governess.

“Your affectionate ward,

“NORA SMYTHE.”

Mr. Fanshawe laughed again and gave way.

“For if she won't, she won't,  
And there's an end on 't,”

he said to his son, quoting the well-known lines.

Mrs. Smythe missed the society of the governess; that is to say, she missed the presence of the third person who had hitherto supported her in her efforts to

entertain Nora. The poor woman had been very happy with her child while she was a little child; but now that her daughter was growing up strong and clever, and indifferent to games and stories, she was happy no longer. Had it been possible to her to think and to make observations on her child's disposition, she would, however, have known how to be happy again.

She would have seen that Nora was essentially a lover of duty, and that though haughty, she had a generous disposition, which would have made the protection of the weak a natural inclination. Could Mrs. Smythe have put herself into her daughter's hands, and trusted to her guidance, they might have been very happy together; Nora the mother, and the mother the child.

But a weak intellect cannot reason, and

a mother may be pardoned who fails to discover that *her* wisdom is to submit to a child of tender years. A jealousy of her rights as mother took hold of Mrs. Smythe's weak nature, and even while shedding tears over her incapacity to guide or influence, she still clung to her rights tenaciously.

Nora had discovered her mother's weakness. She felt it, but had not reasoned upon it. When, therefore, the weak mother attempted petty tyrannies, the child, who felt her own superiority, rebelled.

Thus it was that the mother and daughter were not happy together. Nora, finding a book more entertaining than the feeble twaddle which was all her mother had in store, preferred to pass the evening in reading; and this reading was the plague of Mrs. Smythe's life.

It was in desperation at her own power-

lessness to attract her daughter, that on one dull rainy day Mrs. Smythe told Nora of her prospects in life ; that she was rich, independent, and to be of age at sixteen. This secret had been preserved as a treasure. While she had it, she felt a certain superiority. It was something in store ; it was something Nora had not.

Nora knew well that they were rich ; that, as in the days of King Solomon, silver was little thought of in her house. She knew too, and could not fail to know, that she was a person of importance ; but of her history she knew nothing ; of an existence independent of her mother she had never dreamed.

This secret and one other had lain deep in Mrs. Smythe's mind. The other was the story of the enemies. By Mrs. Ratcliffe's advice this had been buried. "The young people will grow up very nicely, I don't



doubt, ma'am ; and it would be a thousand pities to prevent their being friends together." So she had observed, when Mrs. Smythe had once consulted her on the subject, and the woman of amiable character though weak intellect had submitted with cheerful obedience. This other secret she had no wish to tell ; but the secret of the enormous riches and the independent position was brought out on this rainy day.

Nora was now between fourteen and fifteen. She was lying on the floor, wrapt in "Le Robinson Suisse." No observations could draw her eyes away from her book. In desperation the secret was told ; and its effects had not been too highly pictured. The book was tossed away. With sparkling eyes and eager ears Nora came and sat like a child at her mother's feet, while she heard the tale of the position she was to hold.

“ But be of age at sixteen, mamma ! How can I ? To be of age is to be twenty-one. Papa could not alter that.”

“ I don't know how he did it. I only know it is true. I have often wondered why he settled it. *I* should have thought a girl of sixteen ought not to do everything she pleased ; but he was very wise, and I am sure it is right.”

“ And how rich shall I be, mamma ?”

“ I am sure I don't know. I should think from all I heard more than could be counted. Perhaps hundreds of thousands a-year.”

“ Oh ! mamma, but what shall I do with it ?” And Nora opened wide her large brown eyes.

“ There is plenty to do with money,” said her mother, sagely. “ Of course you must eat and drink and wear clothes, and take

houses, and all this costs a good deal more than young people think. And then, besides, you must give away. Your poor father gave away a great deal to poor people, I always heard."

"Did he, mamma?" and Nora's face and voice softened; "and do we?"

"We would if we could; but we have got no beggars here," and Mrs. Smythe spoke as if she was sorely aggrieved. "But then, Nora, there is one dreadful thing about being rich, people will always be wanting to marry you for your money."

"Marry me, mamma! But they shall not. I shall take good care of that."

"It is no use your taking care; depend upon it that is what will happen. That was what happened to me; and if your poor father had not married me, I am sure I don't know what I should have done. How-

ever, of course I shall take care of you if I am alive."

There was no lack of conversation on that day, nor for many days after; and Mrs. Smythe exulted at the success of her experiment.

Three days after the announcement, Nora told her mother that she had decided on returning to England as soon as she was sixteen, and that her first act would be to buy a large house in the country, and live like a queen; and when once this idea took possession of her mind, there was no end to the imaginative powers exercised. It was like a baby-house to a child of four, who can alter the rooms for ever at her pleasure. On this tangible castle in the air, the young girl's mind could expatiate without ceasing. No details too small; no fancy too exalted. And her mother listened and sympathised,

and was able occasionally to make a humble suggestion of her own regarding the fittings of the new mansion.

## CHAPTER VII.

**B**UT these happy days, this renewed intimacy, did not last long. It was partly the fault of Mrs. Smythe that it came to an end, but much more the fault of Nora. She became a person of immense importance in her own eyes. In her secret cogitations she thought her father must have seen some hidden superior qualities, which prompted him thus to break the common law in her favour; nay, further, she sometimes thought her Heavenly Father must have chosen her for some special distinction. Her heart was lifted up. The immediate consequence was

a separation in her thoughts from her mother. "We" vanished from her common speech, and the unpleasant "I" became prominent.

There was not any real lack of affection in this—on the contrary, already dim thoughts of being her mother's protector were forming themselves within; nor did any future dream commend itself to her eyes, except as acted out before her mother. It was "*I* will do, and *you* will see;" it was, "And when I am this great woman, almost a queen, shall you not be proud of me, mamma?"

Mrs. Smythe did not, however, make distinctions. She found herself put by; her young daughter settling all things without inquiring into her will, and her maternal pride was sorely wounded. Had she spoken in the beginning, had she peevishly said out

her peevish thoughts, the ill would probably have been stayed ; but the soreness was too sore. She brooded on her grievance within, and it grew out of all bounds.

Things went on thus till Nora was within a few months of sixteen ; and then a blow fell upon her, which was a very natural consequence of Mrs. Smythe's state of mind, but one Nora had never even imagined. It arose from the fact that, although concealing her sore heart from Nora and from Mrs. Ratcliffe, the poor mother did make a confidant.

It has been said that the society of her medical advisers was peculiarly agreeable to her. At Geneva, as usual, she found a medical friend. Monsieur Jules d'Alberg was the son of a Swiss pastor and an English woman. His delightful foreign manners, and his English conversation, had early



recommended him to Mrs. Smythe, and she poured her confidences into his ear. He, on his side, was early attracted by the still youthful widow—not attracted by herself, but by her circumstances. He was not a very bad man, but the principle of self-interest was the most largely developed of his qualities, and he saw the means of forwarding his interests here. One thing only withheld him. He could not make out the mother's position. Sometimes she spoke like a princess, and sometimes as if she was the most ill-used of mortals.

Nora from the first disliked him, and with her young tyranny forbade her mother to invite him to tea, as she would have liked to do. Mrs. Ratcliffe neither liked nor disliked, but knowing her mistress's ways, let her alone. She must always have her medical adviser and friend, that she knew, but

she and the rest of the household needed him not. Monsieur d'Alberg, therefore, had no means of making discoveries regarding the position of Mrs. Smythe. Meanwhile he invited her confidence by his charm of demeanour.

It happened one day, when Nora was nearly sixteen, that she said to her mother,

“ I can hardly sleep at night, mamma, for thinking of it all. Oh ! don't you long for the day when we shall go to England ? ” For Nora always supposed that it was something connected with this event that kept them abroad.

Mrs. Smythe was in a peevish humour, and she peevishly replied that she did not see why they should go to England at all.

Nora stared.

“ Not go to England, mamma ? But it is the very first thing I mean to do when I

am of age. Surely you want to go to England?"

Mrs. Smythe reiterated, in the same tone, that she did not. She hated England! Nora was silent for a moment from astonishment and dismay. She then warmly expressed her feelings on the subject, ending with—

“I would rather be a beggar in England than a queen of gold here!”

“I wish you *were* a beggar, or at least a baby again,” said her mother, vexed beyond her poor powers; and when Nora, offended, walked with a stately step out of the room, she burst into tears. She cried till her head ached, and while her head was aching, Monsieur d’Alberg made his call. He soothed and charmed as usual, and she shortly owned to him that she was vexed. She had cried, and crying had made her head ache; and a

few further inquiries revealed the cause. Her daughter meant to go to England, and she did not want to go."

"But how could that be?" he asked with quick diplomacy. "It was not usually the young lady who ruled the house?"

And Mrs. Smythe then told him all things. Her whole life, vexations, grievances, up to that moment. If she was prolix he could bear it, for the tale was of interest to him.

While she spoke he revolved all in his mind. He was in the first instant shocked, for he had supposed her to be enormously rich. But, after a little consideration, he found he might stand on safer ground. He summarily arranged in his mind that Mrs. Smythe's private fortune should be settled on himself and put away, and that he and she should content themselves with her annuity of £1000 a year.

In a few seconds he was prepared to act, and before he left the house he did act, and was not repulsed. After the first moments of delight, however, in finding herself with a lover, a protector, and a home, independent of Nora and her grandeur, the poor weak woman began to weep and to tremble. The mother's heart went after her daughter. How, she said, if Nora persisted in going to England, should she live without her; and how should she ever tell Nora what had occurred?

For the moment M. d'Alberg recommended delay. He soothed her tenderly, and, in short, in a few days one thing he made clear to her mind—come what might, she never could part from him.

A short time elapsed; and at last, one week before the coming of age, Nora was informed that Monsieur d'Alberg was to be

her stepfather. It was Monsieur d'Alberg who performed the task. He saw that, unless he did it, it would never be done. The information was given not without inward trepidation, for Nora had inspired him with some degree of fear, but outwardly with coolness and calmness. He hoped, he said, as he concluded, that she would learn to love him.

It was the first blow in Nora's life, and she was thunderstruck. She could not collect her senses to understand all; but to his last words replying with ineffable disdain, "Never!" she rushed from the room.

He was abashed, and after telling Mrs. Smythe what had passed, left her to contend with Nora alone.

## CHAPTER VIII.

AS far as birth was concerned, Nora had no reason to complain; nevertheless, if all the blood of the Plantagenets had been in her veins, she could not have scorned Monsieur d'Alberg and the alliance more than she did. She had been brought up like a princess, and she felt as a princess might have felt.

“How,” she cried, when at last she went to her mother, “oh! how could you so demean yourself!”

Mrs. Smythe wept bitterly, but in justifying herself, observed that *she* had no reason

to be proud, as her own mother was almost a peasant.

Nora was astounded, and then in very deed the whole tale was told ; not about the enemies, but about the tradesman cousin, and how Mrs. Smythe had been saved from him.

This was Nora's second blow, and deeply felt. Yet, after but little thought, she rose above it. Her nature was essentially noble, and with a feeling of love and respect for what her father had done, she set herself to imitate him. He had saved her mother from unworthy hands, and she would do the same.

As the first tainted passion of wounded pride passed away, her mind seemed to become clearer. She looked steadily into the circumstances, saw her mother's weakness, and Monsieur d'Alberg's motives, and, with a newly aroused passion of love and pity for



that weak mother, endeavoured to save her.

With prayers, with tears, she implored her not to leave her. Would she not be her mother ; be with her all her days, share her fortune, help her if unhappy, nurse her in sickness ?

“ Should they ever ? ” she asked, “ be happy if separated ? ”

A love which Nora had never guessed to be slumbering in her heart, because it had never been awakened from its calm sleep—a love for which Mrs. Smythe had pined for years, now came forth, flowing like waters from a long sealed fountain.

But the toils of another love were already round the mother’s heart ; a love different in its nature, a love which at this moment she would have willingly shaken off ; but it had become her master, and she could not.

She wept again and again ; she clung to

her daughter, and replied that she never would or could leave her ; but when Nora, hopeful and satisfied, asked to be allowed to answer Monsieur d'Alberg, she shook her head and renewed her weeping.

It was not strange that her manner made Nora more suspicious than was just. She thought her mother did not wish for the marriage, but was afraid to break it off, and she determined to take the matter into her own hands.

She was still under sixteen ; but she was, she always had been, precocious. Her thoughts, her feelings on this occasion were those of a woman of a sound and thoughtful mind ; but though her thoughts were sound, the passionate impetuosity of untutored youth guided her actions.

She sent for Monsieur d'Alberg on the following morning, and with a dignity that

astonished him entered on the question. He was a clever man, a self-possessed man, and thirty-five; yet he felt awkward and abashed in her youthful presence. Instead of maintaining a calm dignity, he became insolent; to affront her seemed at that moment the only means he had of putting himself above her.

And when he became insolent, Nora's youthful impetuosity got the better of her womanly dignity. Her eyes flashed, and in no calm terms she told him what she thought of his conduct, laying bare his motives with an acuteness which made him wince. He had no refuge but to return scorn for scorn, and though he had only imperfectly learned Nora's history, he flung it back in her face. What right had she to impute motives of interest to him, who at that very moment was defrauding a cousin of his rights?

The wide open eyes, the transfixed, astonished, innocent look, showed him her ignorance of the whole affair, and he related to her her history with embroidery. He told her of a mad father, of a just heir cut out, of the disputed will, and finally of a young man left in poverty, while she lorded it like a queen. These were the facts he told,—now in French, and now in English; partly in derision of her, and partly in justification of himself.

Nora sat perfectly still. That there must be truth she felt at once, and a truth that would pierce into her very life. Yet she sat still and heard him, and when he ceased she had again resumed the dignity of the woman.

“I do not think your tale can be altogether true,” she said, coldly and calmly, rising as she spoke. “At any rate, it can-

not apply to me ; for if I am defrauding anyone, it is done in ignorance. And be it as it may, it does not affect you. I shall guard my mother from you if I can." And she left him.

But Mrs. Smythe was not to be guarded. Nora soon saw this truth. Saw that the stranger lover had gained that position with her mother which she ought to have had. She saw it—saw that the fault had lain in herself, and was humbled as she saw. Her views for the future did not change, but her dreams were robbed of their beauty. She had not known till now how much the thought of her mother had been bound up with those dreams. She felt how cold and sad it was to enter on life alone. She had, however, an undaunted spirit, and when she saw the event was inevitable she ceased to argue, ceased to remonstrate, and determined only,

with a love touching for her years, to be the protector of her mother's interests now and for ever—to be to her the guardian her father would have been.

She formed her present plans anew, and Mrs. Smythe consented to them. The day after Nora's birthday they should leave Geneva for England, and, as London was distasteful to her mother, take up their abode at Brighton. Then if, on consideration, the mind of Mrs. Smythe remained favourable to matrimony, Monsieur d'Alberg should join them. There the marriage should be celebrated, and there the parting between mother and daughter should take place. Her birthday, meanwhile, passed differently from what she had anticipated. There were no outward signs. Nora came of age, but she kept silence over the circumstance. Not even to Mrs. Ratcliffe did she make any

comments, or show any of that exultation she once had felt. There were words hovering about her, striking roots into her heart, which kept her from all exultation over the future. On the meaning of those words she made no present inquiries, but she meditated upon them within.

On her birthday she received a letter from Mr. Fanshawe—a kind letter, requesting a visit to his house in London, where he might talk over with her the matters of business necessary to be transacted. In her reply she accepted his invitation for herself, and then went on to tell him of her mother's marriage and her proposed plans. She begged him to allow all things to remain unchanged until her visit was paid; begging him only, in the meanwhile, to furnish her with the money necessary for the intended visit to Brighton and the coming marriage,

all which she hoped to take upon herself.

The tone of the letter, its concise and quiet wording, and the forethought shown regarding her mother, surprised Mr. Fanshawe. He took it to the other guardian, Mr. Conway, and observed,

“I thought we should have had trouble with this young lady, powerless advisers as we shall be, but after reading this letter I do not fear ; the girl has a heart and has brains.”

“A powerless adviser I will never be,” said Mr. Conway drily. “The girl is free now. If she asks my advice I give it her, but I force it on no man.”

“True, true ; but she will want advice at first, poor child, and we must stand her friends. Meanwhile, I suppose she must have what money she pleases.”

“She is of age. Of course she must have what money she pleases.”



Mr. Conway and Mr. Fanshawe had been trusty friends of Mr. Smythe's. Mr. Conway was dry, but wise. Mr. Fanshawe was an enthusiast—apt to be run away with by out-of-the-way ideas; but at the same time entertaining for this nature of his so profound a contempt, and for dry wisdom, especially for Mr. Conway's, so profound an admiration, that his enthusiasm was perfectly safe, and her father had chosen wisely in confiding Nora to his care.

She and Mrs. Smythe arrived at Brighton, and it was soon made clear that change of scene dispelled no visions. The discomforts of her journey and a rough passage so disturbed Mrs. Smythe, that she longed again for the peace of Geneva, and the soothing of her medical lover. Monsieur d'Alberg was summoned, and the marriage took place.

The stay at Brighton was embittered to all parties by strife and altercations. Nora, in imitation of her father, and really desirous to take the best care she could of her mother, refused to make any further settlement upon her. With most affectionate words and assurances, she told her in private that all she had was at her disposal ; but to Monsieur d'Alberg she was cold as steel ; and the more he begged and threatened, the more fixed was her resolution to keep the care of her mother in her own hands.

On another and less important point she was equally obstinate. Monsieur d'Alberg wished to have a grand marriage ; Nora refused it. She said the marriage was no pleasure, but a bitter grief to her, and she would not celebrate it. The strife continued to the very last day, but she remained firm ;

and with the greatest privacy and the simplest proceedings the marriage took place.

After the marriage came the parting, and then Madame d'Alberg seemed to feel what she had done. She clung to Nora as if she never would leave her, and had to be lifted fainting into the carriage that bore her away. And on that last day Nora also melted, and implored Monsieur d'Alberg, with tears, to make her mother happy. He answered with great amiability, and after all the strifes, they parted good friends. He had determined for the present to continue in his profession, and to remain at Geneva; and in a very few days to Geneva they returned. Nora and Mrs. Ratcliffe went to London.

## CHAPTER IX.

IT is a long while since there has been any news of Mr. Devereux; but reacquaintance with him must now be made. With the exception that his children had increased in number, and advanced in years, there was no great change in his circumstances, and there was no great change in him. Mr. Smythe's legacy, however disappointing, had been an addition to his income, and his income from other sources had also a little increased; but to set against this, there was the increase in his family, so that upon the whole he was only where he was. The

desire of money was still the one desire of his heart ; the want of money still a need that was felt. He still frittered away any little sums he had in small speculations, too trifling to pay much, too carefully watched to lead to great losses. They occupied his thoughts and his time, and set his heart unceasingly on money ; but they left him much where he was.

During all the years of Nora's youth, he had daily expected to hear of her death. Over and over again he had framed to himself the letter containing the announcement of that event. It was the occupation of dreamy hours to write it, and repeat it to himself. He rarely entered his house without glancing at a certain table, on which letters were placed, to see if it was come ; but as we know, it never came.

This expectation prevented his making

reductions, and therefore it was that, though far from extravagant in his tastes, he was in want of money for very necessary things. At the moment at which we resume our acquaintance, the want of money was indeed a very great want in the house. Henry Devereux was between eighteen and nineteen. He wished to go to Oxford; he had been always told that he should go to Oxford. The time was now come, and it was found impossible; there was no money to do it.

The children of Mr. Devereux had been brought up vaguely. These children were Letitia and Henry, now grown up, and some smaller ones; and all had been, and were being brought up in a vague, desultory way. Sometimes they had had teachers of various kinds, daily or stationary, and pains were bestowed upon them; again, for

months together, they were let alone. Some of their teachers, both daily and stationary, were good, instilled good principles, and taught them well. Some were very much the reverse. It was a kind of scramble. Education was tossed among the children at intervals, and a very alert one might have picked up a good deal. Education, however, not being in general so desirable as halfpence, the most alert on common occasions was not alert in this scramble. The most alert of all the family, the eldest son Henry, had certainly caught the least. He had once been to a master whom he liked, and who had done him some good; for the rest his education had been a scramble indeed. Nevertheless, he had set his heart on going to Oxford.

Henry Devereux and his father were good friends. This was remarkable, for

better fathers than Mr. Devereux might have felt jealousy of the son whose name was put in his place. But the enormous injury done to father and son alike by the birth of Nora covered all petty jealousies. No trifling legacy to Henry could make amends for the loss of both their rights. To do Mr. Devereux justice, also, he had his natural affections. He was a faithful, though not an adoring husband to Letitia Allen; and he was a faithful, though not agreeable father to his children.

Of all his children, Henry was his favourite; and yet Henry was the only one who had no likeness, nor the shadow of a shade of a likeness, to himself. Letitia had grown up a sharp, shrewd girl, with good features, and a hard face—not exactly like her father's, but very like him. The younger children also exhibited mental and bodily



features which, with a thrill of rapture, Mrs. Devereux pronounced to be like papa. But Henry was formed in a different mould. He was a wild, careless, impetuous, passionate, and good-tempered boy. He rarely thought; he never calculated, never compared, or put two and two together; he closed his eyes to disagreeables, and set his heart violently on the pleasures of life. He had many amiable and even excellent qualities; and his mother, being naturally amiable and well-principled, had let fall, without the least consciousness of doing so, many drops of wisdom and goodness among her children, and these Henry had often picked up. But his education had been, as has been said, a scramble, and he had picked up also a good deal that was neither amiable nor wise.

From early years Henry had heard much

about his rights, and had formed his own opinion, therefore, as to what his future life should be. It was very well to talk of a profession, and to agree to being a lawyer, when he was told that that would be the best choice ; but his intention was to enjoy himself without any profession whatever. His rights would probably come some day, and if they did not, he knew he had a legacy. He rarely thought, was perfectly careless as to the value of money, knew not whether the Queen had a thousand or a million a year, but wished to enjoy himself, and be let alone.

Of the probable death of his cousin, the one person who stood between him and his rights, he sometimes thought. If people were very disagreeable, and pressed upon him hard truths about the future—truths which a latent good sense forced him to ac-

knowledge, then he re-assured himself by saying to himself,

“They may talk, but it’s all nonsense; there’s only a life between me and millions, and of course it will die.”

But this quieting assurance of a death was without the least grain of malice in it. The thought of that death gave him ease from disagreeable reflections, and he took the ease when he required it, without once reasoning on what it was that soothed him.

Nevertheless, if there was a shade of bitterness in Henry’s nature, it was in his feelings towards this cousin. He had been told to hate her in his early youth, and that instruction had been among the things picked up and cherished. With glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes, he had then said he

hated her, and the sensation was carried on, and improved upon from year to year.

Not that he thought much about her—not that he would have done her any harm, or would have refused to do her any good, had such a possibility been actually in his power. The hate was a vague sensation, but such as it was it was cherished. It was a pleasurable excitement to hear his father abuse her; it was pleasurable to feel that every grievance in the family was caused by her. It had certainly been a pleasure to hear, when once it had reached their ears, that she was a purse-proud little thing. She was the enemy; he had been told to hate her, and he did.

“I wish your gowns were prettier,” he said one day to his sister; it was after she was grown up, and when a boy’s eyes are

beginning to like to see a young lady well-dressed.

Letitia had not good taste. If there was an ugly shade of a pretty colour to be seen, she always chose it; but she was not conscious of her deficiency, and she answered dryly and peevishly,

“I can't help my gowns. I am not Miss Smythe. *She* wears beautiful silks, of course, but *I* can't.”

It was thus; it was by allusions such as this that Nora's name was constantly brought before Henry's eyes. She was associated with all that was disagreeable. He thought of her as a vague being, who, having first deprived him of his rights, now lived in luxury, while those whom she had injured, suffered endless disappointments, privations, and wrongs.

At the present moment there was a worse

grievance, of which, as usual, she was the cause. Henry had set his heart on going to Oxford. This desire was from no worthy motive. Among his youthful follies was a great desire to be grand and fine; to be, in familiar language, "a swell." As he had not been to a public school, he thought a sojourn at Oxford, where his agreeable qualities might make him popular, was the best way to achieve this object; and it was to secure that object that he gave his careless acquiescence to the prospect of being a lawyer.

It has been said that among Henry's masters was one who had once done him good. Of him more will be heard. He was a private tutor, and with him Henry had remained for upwards of two years. It was while with him that he had had for a companion a youth whose destiny it was to be great

without effort. He was a well-disposed boy, but proud of his destiny, and somewhat given to boasting. Too well-bred to boast of present rank, he chose rather to boast of his ancestors; to bring forward and comment on a fine Norman name, which showed, he said, that his forefathers had been powerful barons, perhaps princes, in the days of William the Conqueror.

Henry was a youth of ambitious soul. He was not desirous of *doing* any great things, but he was ambitious of grandeur. The confined sphere in which his father and mother lived was small and dull and ugly in his eyes. When the Norman youth boasted he felt humbled, and cast about his eyes in search of comfort. It was at this time that he discovered that he, too, had an historic name; that *he* might talk of ancestors; and, though he was not aware of there

being any connection with the families, might observe that the head of his family was the first Viscount in England. The discovery was an ineffable consolation to him. When he told it to his friend, and added to it the story of his rights, he saw that the respect of the friend increased. More than ever it was impressed upon his mind that he was born to grandeur, and that it was his duty to take his proper place in the world.

After leaving this private tutor, his education flagged for a time. There was a want of money in the house, and Henry was left to his own devices. He lived at home by way of keeping up his studies, but he was chiefly occupied in paying visits. One young companion introduced him to another young companion, and an idle, handsome, good-tempered boy, who was up to anything,



seemed to lack no friends ; his company was always welcome.

Mr. Devereux was not given to think of the moral or intellectual good of his children. This being a time when money was scarce, Henry's frequent absences from home were agreeable to him, and for two or three years, from fifteen to eighteen, he was allowed to idle as he pleased.

But though Henry idled and got into a good deal of mischief, he did not forget his object. He was always thinking of college ; and when the time came, and his father told him that his going was impossible, he was not only disappointed—he was vexed and angry. The blame, of course, was laid on Nora ; but as she was a vague, absent being, the vexation was visited on those nearer to him. For the first time in his life Henry was cross—out of temper, not for a moment,

but for days and weeks together. He thought himself ill-used. The disappointment caused him to think a little, and he hated thought. He could not help looking on and saying once or twice, if he did not have his rights, what should he do in life? And the mere act of thought disturbed him.

It was about this time that Mr. Devereux, one morning as he sat at breakfast, exclaimed,

“So that woman has married again!”

“What woman?” said Mrs. Devereux, who was ever dull.

“That woman,” he repeated, with his usual politeness.

“Oh, papa!” cried Letitia, “has Miss Smythe really married? Married, and at sixteen! What a shame!”

“Not Miss Smythe, but the mother.”

“What, that old woman!” said Letitia.

“Not old,” observed Mrs. Devereux with dignity, for she knew her to be several years younger than herself.

“You know what I mean, mamma; and whom has she married?”

Mr. Devereux read the paragraph:—

“At Brighton, Anne Smythe, widow of the late Joshua Smythe, Esq., to Monsieur Jules d’Alberg, of Geneva.”

“Of Geneva!” observed Letitia, “Oh! then they don’t mean to settle in England. I am glad of that. I should have hated to have them here.”

“I don’t know about that, Letitia,” said Mrs. Devereux in her drawling voice. “I think I am sorry. I am afraid it puts an end to my plan.”

“Your plan, mamma! What is your plan?”

“Why, you see, as Henry is the person who will in the end suffer the most by the dreadful will, it struck me the other day that the best of all things that could happen would be for Henry to marry her ; and I really don't see why it should not happen.”

Up to this point Henry had not paid any attention to the conversation. He possibly was listening, but he paid no attention. Usually he was what is called the life and soul of the party, the only one who had much life or much soul ; but since his displeasure, he had retired behind a penny newspaper, which he took in himself for the very purpose of showing his displeasure.

After Mrs. Devereux spoke, both gentlemen moved—Mr. Devereux slightly, taking one quick, sidelong glance at his son. Mr. Simon Devereux had a mean soul. He could hate with intense and venomous hate, and

yet profit by the person hated, and be willing to do so.

Henry was otherwise formed. His hate was not of a venomous kind ; it might not be Christian (it was not very un-Christian), nevertheless, it was a true feeling ; it was good sound hate, so far as it went. His cheek grew crimson at his mother's words, and with flashing eyes he cried—

“ Don't dare to plan about me, mother, for I won't suffer it. If every limb of her body was made of pure gold of Ophir, I would rather die than touch her !”

The voice was so intensely in earnest, that there was a pause. Mr. Devereux buried himself in his newspaper, and though he had faintly expected a different answer, murmured under his voice, “ Right.”

Mrs. Devereux, as usual, stared. She knew they all hated, and she hated too, but she was

always surprised when any reality appeared in the hate. It was a feeling that had grown up in her family, and which she dutifully encouraged, to please her husband, but she never took in what it all meant. Letitia stared also.

“What nonsense you talk, Henry!” she said, carelessly. “I am sure I hate her as much as you do, and would do her any harm I could; but I would marry her to-morrow, if I was a man, both for the money’s sake, and for the pleasure of vexing her.”

Henry deigned no answer, and as Letitia rarely thought it worth while to talk only to her mother, the conversation dropped.

A few mornings afterwards, however, it was resumed. Henry’s penny newspaper contained sometimes news of a description not admitted to the newspaper of Mr. Deve-

reux, and he one day found in it a short account of the marriage that had lately taken place at Brighton. There was nothing of interest to record, but for lack of subjects of greater moment, about twenty lines were devoted to Mrs. Smythe. There was some statement and some mis-statement of facts. The great wealth of the bride was mentioned, and the fact that, nevertheless, the bridegroom intended to resume his duties. The weak nerves of the lady were said to be the cause of the quiet marriage, but it was graced by the presence of her beautiful and accomplished daughter, who had just attained her twenty-first year, and entered into possession of enormous wealth. It was then added that, after a short honeymoon, the whole party intended to return to their beautiful residence on the Lake of Geneva.

Love or hate both excite interest, and though Henry had, as he supposed, a scorn for everything that could be called gossip, he read this paragraph with interest ; and when he had read it to himself, he was sufficiently amiable to pass it over to his mother, to whom he knew the very smallest article of gossip to be acceptable. She read it to herself with quiet delight, and then began drawling it out to Letitia, who, before it was half done, impatiently snatched the paper from her hand.

There were often petty disputes between Letitia and her mother, owing to Letitia's superior sharpness and desire to tyrannize. Mr. Devereux usually sided with his daughter, but Henry always with his mother, and that was perhaps the reason why he was inclined to talk on this day.

“What was the use of reading that, mam-



ma," said Letitia. "There is nothing whatever in it."

"I don't know," she replied. "It tells me some things that I did not know before. I certainly did not know that Miss Smythe was so handsome."

"Oh! mamma, how silly! Newspapers say 'beautiful and accomplished' to anybody, however hideous."

"Well, but, my dear, she might be handsome. Mrs. Ratcliffe used to tell me that her mother was very pretty, and she might, you know, take after her instead of her poor father."

"Was her father very ugly?" asked Henry.

He knew perfectly what the answer would be, but to hear anything against the Smythes was a pleasure to him that never was satiated.

"Ugly! Oh! my dear Henry, if you could

have seen him, poor man. It was as if he had two noses one after the other. If his daughter," she added, thoughtfully, "has a nose at all like his, it is impossible she can be handsome."

"And she has, you may depend upon it."

"Poor girl! Then I really do pity her."

"I don't," said Henry, "there is no room for pity. Nose or no nose, she has done too well for herself for that."

"I sometimes think," said Mrs. Devereux, forgetting the hate, as was not unusual, "that perhaps it is almost a pity that we are so prejudiced against her. She may not be as bad as we think. I sometimes wish we could have a good account of her."

"Don't talk trash," said her husband,

shortly. "There is no good account to be heard."

"And I," said Henry, sticking to his mother, "should like to hear an account of her, too. But what I should be glad to hear is, that she is just what I think she is."

"You shall hear about her if you please," observed Mr. Devereux. "I have an acquaintance at Brighton who knows all that goes on. I dare say this marriage will not have escaped him. I will write and inquire."

It was not to please Henry, however, that Mr. Devereux wrote. He was anxious himself to hear further particulars. He was especially anxious to know whether she looked sickly, and likely to do her duty and die.

Francis Horner, in his diary, observes that asking questions is an art, and one in

which he is deficient. At a later date in the same diary he remarks that he was improved in the art of asking questions. These questions were of course with a view to eliciting information; but there is another sense in which there is an art in questioning. When we wish for a particular answer to be given, the enquiry has to be framed with art and nicety. The answer must, in fact, be contained in the question.

It was on this principle that Mr. Deveureux framed his inquiries to his Brighton acquaintance. He wished to know that Nora was all he had depicted her to be, and he gave his cue. He said that he had great fears, from various things he had heard, that she was purse-proud, miserly, and heartless. He should be glad to know if any circumstances of her conduct at Brighton agreed with this character, as, once informed of her

real character, he should be better able to deal with her. After answering a good many other inquiries contained in the letter, the gentleman, in his reply, wrote thus :

“ It is curious that the words you apply to Miss Smythe should be precisely those which I had applied to her character from the circumstances which reached my ears. I am afraid all I have to say tallies with your pre-conceived opinion. You must know that she took lodgings in the same street in which I live, and her comings and goings were under my eye. That she is miserly may be easily gathered from many facts of her conduct. In the first place, rich as she is, she chose to go into lodgings—very decent ones, but not at all suitable to the wealth she is said to possess. While there she lived in the smallest possible way, and even at the time of the marriage showed

no liberality. The mistress of the house is an acquaintance of my wife's, and from her we heard these and other particulars. She, good woman, was anxious for a little of the pomp of matrimony, and so, also, she says, was the mother, Mrs. Smythe. But the young lady did not choose to have it so. The marriage was not only private, but shabby. The dresses were decent, but no more. There was not an attempt to do honour to her mother. And yet so fond of power is Miss Smythe, that she insisted on having every bill brought to herself. She would be all in all—her mother nothing.

“I have often met them in the street. The mother is young-looking, and looks kind and gentle. Miss Smythe is less easy to describe. I understand she is only sixteen, but she looks several years older. She is what some would call a fine girl, but I did

not admire her. Her hair and eyes are good, but her features are large and cold. She does not exactly look unhealthy, but neither does she look young and blooming. I myself admire amiable-looking women, and if I had to choose I would choose the mother before the daughter.

“ I omitted to tell you that I heard in confidence from a friend who drew up Monsieur d’Alberg’s settlements, a trait which I think very bad. Mrs. Smythe, it appears, was left with a jointure of only £1,000 a year—a very small sum, considering the property her husband possessed. As she may very possibly have a new family, she was exceedingly anxious to have something to settle on them, something beyond a life interest, and implored her daughter to make such a provision ; but Miss Smythe declined in the most determined manner. Now, con-

sidering that she has but one parent, but one near relation, I own I think her conduct unjustifiable."

"It is vile! it is loathsome!" cried Henry, interrupting with violence. "Let me hear no more!—never hear her name again! I am ashamed to be, however distantly, connected with such a wretch!"

The whole party looked surprised. Again the reality of Henry's vehemence astonished. Mr. Devereux folded up his letter and put it in his pocket, saying, "It was only what I expected. A good account would have surprised me much more."

"I am afraid she must have got her father's nose," observed Mrs. Devereux. "He says her features are large, you see."

"That does not follow," was Letitia's observation. "I am very much afraid she is handsome."



“It matters very little what she is,” Henry said. “With a mind like hers, she must be hateful, even had she the features of Venus!”

“You are so ridiculous,” said his sister; then added, laughing, “if you talk so violently, you will end by falling in love with her.”

Henry got up, and banged the door as he went out; Letitia laughed; Mrs. Devereux stared as usual; Mr. Devereux looked up, and then looked down again. Passion surprised him also; his hate was calm and cold; he could hardly understand his son's warmth on the subject.

## CHAPTER X.

WHEN Nora parted from her mother and came to London, all her haughtiness of disposition, the acquired haughtiness of circumstances, and all the self-reliance of her nature, the fruit partly of circumstances and partly of disposition, were, for the first time, beat out of her. She had failed in her duty to her mother; her lack of tenderness had driven her into a marriage that promised little happiness. She felt this truth with the keenness of a strong and honest nature, and it bowed her before herself in

sackcloth and ashes. She had failed. Pride fled at the thought.

She felt very lonely on entering London. There had been a time when the thought of her all-sufficiency to herself had charmed her; but that charm was gone. Those possible brilliant prospects on which she was entering looked cold and dead; there was no one to admire her, no one to smile on her, and the glow of light in which they had been bathed, vanished. With quiet resolution she examined these prospects, and there was but one thought in the future that brought a kind of life and beating to her heart—the idea that by something she might do she might win this family of cousins of whom Monsieur d'Alberg had told her; this family who hated her; or, to speak more correctly, might win that one cousin, the young man whom she had been

politely informed must wish her dead. The lonely catch at slight helps to ease their loneliness, and this family of distant cousins had in a short time become tangible objects in Nora's mind and affections. For some, the thought of being hated would have prevented the growth of feelings of kindness ; but Nora's nature was otherwise made—its very strength and self-reliance made her rise out of the atmosphere of personal considerations. She would be glad to receive, but that which she was longing for was to give, affection.

She had received, as was said, an invitation to her guardian's house, and thither she repaired, and found him alone. He had a married daughter and a blind son, who both made his house their home when they pleased ; but both were absent now.

On the very first meeting Mr. Fanshawe

lost his heart to his ward. This would not have been the case with many guardians. The matronly girl of sixteen, calm and collected as a woman of thirty, would have had little charm for many elderly men. But Mr. Fanshawe, being himself an enthusiast, had a fanatical admiration for practical qualities and common sense, and he submitted himself at once to the influence of the young maiden who came to him for protection and advice. He saw at a glance the strength of her character. He did not see, not at that first glance, that an enthusiasm equal to his own was hid under her quiet manners, and was ready at a spark to gleam out of her dark eye. But he discovered something of it during the first evening, for no sooner was dinner over than she asked him, with some abruptness, as he stood enjoying his cup of coffee by his drawing-room fire, to tell her

all about her father's will. "Your father's will," he said, amazed. "Why, what do you want to know?"

"All the facts," she said. "I have heard them, but perhaps from an enemy. I want to know the very truth about it all."

"Bless my soul! why, what do you suspect? Why, I was one of the witnesses to the will. What are you going to accuse me of, my dear?"

Nora did not smile.

"I have heard the story only once," she replied; "I wish to hear it again. All, everything—from the day of my father's marriage till the day of his death."

"I wish Mr. Conway was here," said Mr. Fanshawe in his heart. This was a little soliloquy which was almost unconsciously made within, whenever he thought anything of responsibility was attached to his words.

Notwithstanding his wish for Mr. Conway, he felt himself, however, in no difficulty on this occasion. He collected the particulars from the recesses of his memory, and being a man of truth, and becoming warm with the telling of a tale to so attentive a listener, he laid before her all the facts connected with the wills, together with the behaviour of all parties connected with the affair.

Nora listened in silence till he had done. She then drew a deep breath, and said,

“ I think the case is clear ; I must give it all up.”

“ Bless my soul !” he said, pushing back the chair which he had drawn nearer and nearer to her. “ Why, what have I said ?”

“ Nothing but the truth—it *was* the truth I had heard. If I had not been born, my cousin would have had all. Why was I born ?”

“Why, my dear child, for no other reason that I can imagine but that it pleased God.”

The extreme simplicity with which this was said made Nora smile. But the smile faded, and the cloud returned.

“What I say is true,” she said. “I am an intruder. I cannot live on and bear it. Let them make their claim, and take what they claim.”

“And say your father was mad? Your poor father, who was as good and true a man as ever lived, who knew what he was about to the day of his death as well as I do—who thought he was making a right disposition of his money in leaving it to his child—one who he hoped would follow his steps—and in cutting it off from the bad, who would, he guessed, abuse it. Very well; if this is your first act, of course, neither I nor Mr.



Conway have any power to forbid you ; but —but *I* wash my hands of it.”

In vain, from the first words of this oration, had Nora endeavoured to arrest him. He would not be arrested ; his mind, filled with the thoughts conjured up by his tale, had become excited for the memory of his old friend, and he ran on breathlessly, unheeding the gestures and exclamations that attempted to stay his words. Before he concluded, Nora was in tears.

“ I never meant that,” she said. “ Do not accuse me of it. I will do whatever you advise.”

This little excitement had the effect of righting the positions of the elderly man and the young girl. Nora’s might be the strongest nature, but she had no knowledge of life. Mr. Fanshawe, taken by her manners, had been disposed to retreat into ob-

security, and all the comfort of his relations with her might have been lost. But to cause tears in a pretty young lady is a feat of which a guardian may be proud, and Mr. Fanshawe felt a thrill of elation tingle through his veins. All was as it should be, and he set himself to soothe and to advise with all his powers. And except that he had his weaknesses of enthusiasm, and except that almost anyone who had the will could take advantage of his weakness and guide him, he was well fitted to be her friend. For he had sense and principle, and such a dread of himself, as made him always in the first instance oppose whatever his self was inclined to do. He and Nora, therefore, entered quietly on this question of one person standing in another's light, and he spoke with a truth and force that allayed the turmoil of his mind. She began to see

again that her father had had the right to entrust her wealth to her, if he chose, and to feel again the responsibility that trust laid upon her shoulders.

Nevertheless these cousins, this young cousin, occupied her mind, and when she reappeared on the following morning, it was with plans to be laid before her guardians for their benefit. The light that had faded from her prospects was beginning to gleam again, and the brightness that was kindled arose from the thought of being their benefactress. She would bear her wealth as it was laid upon her, but it should be for their sakes. She began with inquiries regarding them. Mr. Fanshawe did not know much.

“After their behaviour, my dear, to your poor father, I cut them,” was his first short answer.

“But they might have improved,” she suggested.

He was sorry to say that Mr. Devereux had not improved. That much he did know. He was a bad man. Mrs. Devereux, he believed, was a fool, and he did not like what he heard of the children. Nora was set down for a moment, then returned to the charge.

“I was talking to Mrs. Ratcliffe last night,” she said, “and she spoke of my cousin. She says she saw him once, and he was a beautiful boy.”

“May be so; but I fear, I fear he is a young scamp. Of him, however, you shall hear more, if you please. I was telling you of my poor blind son. His mania is education, and five or six years ago he had Henry Devereux in his charge. He was a scamp,

depend upon it, but my son has a liking for him."

Nora's heart bounded with pleasure, and felt a glow of warmth towards the poor blind son. She said no more of him, however, but began to explain to her guardian her views as to being a help to her cousins, and asked him whether, in her place, he should not feel as she did.

"If I was to die they would have all. Why make them wish for my death? Why should I not help them now?"

Her pathetic voice touched Mr. Fanshawe, and he agreed that he should, in her place, wish to help them. But no sooner had he agreed than he drew back again. He and Mr. Conway had indeed already conversed on this subject, and had determined for the present to keep her out of Mr. Devereux's hands. He was a dangerous man, and once

placed in communication with her, there was no saying how he might prey upon her. They were no longer her guardians, but they had resolved, with the best of their power, to keep her from the influence of her cousins until she had come to an age more proper to manage for herself. All this, in apology for his rapid change of opinion, Mr. Fanshawe told her freely.

This passed in the morning, and being then forced to leave her, Nora remained with her disappointment alone. But a young and lively mind is not easily damped, nay, it is almost certain that if a natural desire is in any way repelled, it will find a hundred less natural ways of shooting forth. And so it was that as Nora talked with herself, and thought to herself, she came suddenly upon the idea of being a secret benefactress. The idea was no sooner formed than it grew up

bright and beautiful, and it was a cherished thing before Mr. Fanshawe returned at night.

And at the first possible moment it was laid before him ; not with all its brightness and fascination about it, but in the calm, sensible, prosaic way in which many bright inward cogitations are produced to the world, and so calmly and prosaically was it placed before him, that Mr. Fanshawe actually acceded to it as a good plan. He had certainly felt as she did, that in her place he should wish to do something ; and yet no arguing had lessened his dislike to placing her in communication with Mr. Devereux. All the day long he had felt perplexed and annoyed, and afraid of further pressure, and Nora's idea relieved him from his difficulty. In the first instant he spoke his approval with warmth ; then a vision of Mr. Conway

arose, and he qualified his approval. He finally ended with—

“Certainly, as you say, it will be right to do something, and this will give us a handle. I will make inquiries regarding his present needs, and one of these days you shall hear from me. A man with a family is best assisted by some help for the education of his children.”

“Not one of these days, but now,” Nora said imploringly. “Let me get this off my mind. Of course he must want to educate his children. Could you have him informed that a friend of his family will give him henceforth a sum every year?”

“No, no, not every year—till further notice we will say.”

“As you please. The only thing I should wish would be to ensure a part to my cousin.”



“Your cousin—the young man, you mean. Well, we can do that. And what sum do you propose?”

“I was thinking of two thousand a year ; one thousand five hundred to Mr. Devereux, and——”

“Two thousand a year ! Bless my soul, child, why, what are you thinking of ? If we are to buy a property and build a house, and pension widows, and educate orphans, why, where do you suppose all the money is to come from ? You may be rich, but riches have wings and fly away.”

“What, then, shall it be?”

“Not one penny more than a thousand ; and I don't know what Mr. Conway will say to that.”

“But what, then, could my cousin have ?”  
And Nora looked perplexed.

“Your cousin—what, the young man ?”

Mr. Fanshawe did not, as Nora did, ignore the relationship to the older persons, and fix it on the younger and more distant connexion. "Oh! he could have three hundred a year—enough and too much, if all I hear of him be true."

As three hundred and three thousand were sums regarding the value of which Nora was in equal ignorance, she quietly acquiesced, and warmly thanked her guardian for his consent to her plans.

"My consent, yes; but we must hear what Mr. Conway says. And meanwhile you shall hear more about that young scamp, Henry Devereux. My son knows him. We will go down to-morrow and visit my son at Windsor. I will write a line this evening—no, stay, it must be the day after."

## CHAPTER XI.

STEPHEN FANSHAWE kept a school, or home, rather, for eight or ten boys, in the neighbourhood of Windsor. As they drove from the station, Mr. Fawshawe talked to Nora of his son. How that, although born blind, he was so active-minded and intelligent, that he seemed to know the things in the world by intuition, and rarely betrayed in his conversation that he saw them not. That one of his special pleasures was travelling, and how, ten years before this time, when he was twenty, he had joined some boys who were in Switzerland, under

the charge of a tutor; had there discovered that to influence boys was his special faculty; how ever since he had devoted himself to education, and how successful he had been.

“He does it for love, poor fellow,” his father said, “not money; but as his desire was to educate *gentlemen*, he was obliged to form his plans on the usual scale. Privately, however, he is able to make exceptions to his rules, and I fancy that was the case with Henry Devereux.”

They were late on arriving at Summerhill, and were shown into luncheon by Stephen Fanshawe, who came out to receive them, to a party consisting of two ladies and nine boys.

When her first awkwardness was over, Nora was amused by the novelty of the scene, and would contentedly have listened

to the conversation of her guardian with the boys, but that her attention was perpetually engaged by the ladies, one of whom sat by her side. She was not given to consider the requirements of society. Nor had she ever thought of making herself agreeable for politeness sake ; and when in the course of conversation she discovered that these ladies had been invited to meet her, she felt vexed and misunderstood. She was desirous to talk to Stephen Fanshawe, and responded eagerly enough when he addressed her ; but unsatisfied to talk to her alone, he perpetually drew into the conversation the quiet, unassuming lady who sat by her side ; guiding her, though not forcing her, into acquaintanceship.

Had she known Stephen Fanshawe she would have guessed that he had a purpose in view. His father, who had been in the

beginning as surprised as Nora was at the presence of strangers, soon surmised the cause.

Stephen Fanshawe was, like his father, an enthusiast in benevolence ; but, unlike his father, without shame or apologies—without hesitation, doubts, or fears. His benevolence was a benevolence of his own. It did not find vent in large plans, or give its name to gigantic schemes, but humbly imitated, or tried to imitate, in its own little sphere, and within its own tiny limits, the watchful Providence of the Father of all. It was a benevolence that never slept ; it heard the least appeal that was made to it, nor waited for appeals—its eye was always wandering round, watching for objects for its attention, planning for such as were found. His brain was like the cells in a beehive, and few things were mentioned in his presence that

did not, in some far-fetched manner, perhaps, strike on the history of some occupant of some cell.

Thus it was that, when Nora's coming was announced, a thought in a few seconds sprang up regarding the occupant of one cell of his brain.

To tell the history shortly, he hoped to place this occupant in Nora's house as her companion. She was a lady of about three-and-thirty, whose tale had excited his compassion. She had been her father's companion and devoted daughter until she was twenty-seven. At that time he had been married by a scheming widow with a child. After a very few years he died and left all he had to his wife during her lifetime. The home that had been happy became one of utter misery, and the daughter longed to escape.

Stephen Fanshawe had met her and heard her story some short time before this, and no sooner was Nora's name mentioned to him than his plot was formed.

It will save time to say here that it was successful. As regarded the real object of her visit, she was, on the whole, satisfied. Some disappointment she felt on discovering that Stephen Fanshawe was no longer on terms of intimacy, scarcely on speaking terms, with Henry Devereux. He gave his opinion, in contradiction to his father, that he was *not* a scamp, yet he owned that he was idle and careless, and feared that he was wasting his life in folly and amusement. "But I never see him now," he said, "and have heard but little of him of late."

"And why, if you had influence once, do you never see him?" Nora asked, eagerly.



“ Because I am cut by him and by his whole family. He was an unruly boy when he was with me, but I bore with him for the sake of his good qualities—and they are many—as long as was possible. But some things a master cannot do. He must not pardon defiance; and we were forced to part.”

“ But that was long ago ? ” Nora said.

“ Yes; three or four years ago. But neither Henry nor his family can forgive me. Henry has a peculiar disposition. It is at once sweet and vindictive; I do not know how the combination is effected; both passionate and good-tempered—both resentful and placable. He cannot forgive, and yet I am sure would never willingly harm a fly. As to me, he thinks I ill-used him; and, though he liked me, almost loved me once, he cannot forgive. For a time I made ad-

vances, perhaps wearied him with endeavours at reconciliation. Of late I have left him alone."

Though disappointed by this account, and somewhat distressed too—feeling that she also might never be forgiven for her involuntary fault in being born,—yet certainly it tended to increase Nora's interest in her cousin, and she entered eagerly on her proposed plans; or listened, rather, with eagerness—for she was not herself a talker—while Mr. Fanshawe conversed with his son. In answer to Mr. Fanshawe's slighting question, "But what will a young fellow like that do with three hundred a-year?" Stephen replied—

"I know very well what he will do. Henry's heart is set on going to college, and his father cannot afford to send him."

“To college!—I did not know the scatter-brained young fellow could form such a reasonable wish.”

“I do not know,” Stephen said, smiling, “that it is exactly for purposes of study, but this is his present wish. I have heard of it from a person we both know. He wishes it so earnestly, that he is thoroughly out of heart and temper because his father declines to send him. Miss Smythe, if she is anxious to help the young man, cannot be doing a more kindly deed.”

As regarded the secrecy of the plan, Stephen declined to give an opinion. Nora fancied that he did not approve, but evidently he thought it was no business of his to interfere with her or his father; and having satisfied them to the best of his power regarding Henry, left the rest of the busi-

ness to be settled between Nora and her guardian. This was very shortly done, Mr. Conway's sanction having been obtained.

## CHAPTER XII.

THE one master who has been mentioned as having an influence over Henry Devereux for good was Stephen Fanshawe. The one time in his life when he received what could be called education was during his stay in his house.

About three years after his devoting himself to the education of boys, Stephen had met Henry while on a visit to one of his pupils, and a mutual attraction had taken place between the blind man and the mad-cap boy. Henry had looked with a kind of awful pity at the sightless eyes—moved by pity, had watched, and then wondered at

the cheerful disposition and simple manners; and thus moved to attention, had been won. On the other hand, the heartfelt mirth and merriment of Henry's character had caught the blind man's fancy. There was in him a reckless yet innocent abandonment to thoughtlessness which was more like the mirth of a young animal than of a human being, and he speculated upon him with a fascinated attention.

Henry was at this time twelve years old. In his conversation with his new friend he soon betrayed the deficiencies of his education, and Stephen Fanshawe was filled with a desire to supply them. He heard enough of the character of Mr. Devereux to guess how the desire might be gratified; and while winning Henry to wish to come to him, he set before him the advantages of the offer he made.

These advantages were great. As his father had said, his work was done for love, not money ; and though carefully guarding his house from the suspicion of being a charitable institution, he was able to make a reduction in his charges when he pleased, and this reduction he willingly offered to make in Henry's case.

Having won Henry to wish, he left the affair alone, but was shortly gratified by receiving a letter from Mr. Devereux, asking him the lowest terms on which he would take his son as a pupil. Henry was a pertinacious youth, and although, in the first instance, he had met with a refusal, he continued to put forth his wish, and the advantages of his wish, until Mr. Devereux became himself convinced that he could do no better thing for his son.

Henry was placed under his care, and re-

mained with him for nearly three years. The happy arrangement then came to an end by Henry's own fault. During all the years of his stay he was a troublesome charge; but partly from the charm of his disposition, and partly from compassion for his neglected education, Stephen bore with him with patience and in hope. But a grave act of disobedience was at last committed, and justice acknowledged that further mercy would be a sin.

So ended the connection, and neither Henry nor his family either forgot or forgave. It was Henry's last chance, and from that time, as has been related, he had led a life of amusement and idleness.

It was about three weeks after the conversations recorded in the last chapter that Mr. Devereux received a note from his banker, requesting to speak to him. On his



appearing, the gentleman said that he had been desired to make known to him that a distant relation had placed seven hundred pounds to his account, and that he had been ordered to place three hundred pounds to the name of Mr. Henry Devereux, with whom he must open an account. He added that he had orders to say that the same sum would be paid yearly until further notice.

Mr. Devereux listened with an impassive face. He was surprised, but he had no intention of allowing his banker to discover this.

“From whom, did you say?” he asked carelessly.

“From a distant relation, who does not wish to be known.”

“There are several from whom, if I had my due, such a sum, and much more, might come. If, however, he or she is really un-

willing to be named, I must submit." He looked craftily in the banker's face.

"She is unwilling," said the unwary gentleman.

Mr. Devereux asked no more. He knew from whence it came, and yet did not desire to know it. He had a mean soul. He would have done Nora all the harm he could, but he was ready to receive a benefit from her.

With a cold and haughty manner, as if the intelligence had been without interest, he conversed for a while with the banker, and then returned home. As he walked he reflected. He knew that Henry had not a mean soul; he knew, also, that he had an impracticable temper, and he guessed that if he surmised from whence the money came, he would refuse to receive it. As *his* acute mind had instantly guessed at the truth, so

he feared might Henry's. He walked and thought, and was perplexed how to act.

His anxiety that Henry should accept it was extreme. Henry was still making himself an unpleasant inmate of the family, and to all appearance would continue to do so until he obtained his wish. Yet, to accede to that wish was far from Mr. Devereux's intention; was, indeed, unless he subjected the rest of the family, and, moreover, himself, to great inconveniences, out of his power. To have Henry provided for was indeed a boon.

He at length laid his plan, and the next morning called Henry into his room, and told him that he had just received information that a legacy of one thousand pounds a year had been left to him.

"I am sure I am very glad," burst in

Henry. "Then *now*, perhaps, you will let me go to college."

"Exactly," said his father. "It was for that reason that I sent for you. Three hundred pounds is to be paid to your account. You must give your signature at the bank, and draw it out as you find you want it. I think I need not impress upon you that you must be careful. Three hundred a year is a large, a very large allowance for a young man in your position, but it is easily frittered away."

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you, my dear father!" Henry cried, with warmth and even affection. "I am afraid I have been very sullen and bad, but it was because I thought you *would* not do it when you could. Now I see, and I am very sorry for having been so ill-tempered."

Mr. Devereux calmly received his son's apologies; then cleared his throat, and turned over some papers. He expected an inquiry as to the legacy, and was anxious to have the question put and answered as soon as possible.

But not such was Henry's turn of mind. More thoughtless and careless than any child, a legacy seemed to him as natural as his daily bread. He and his father, and mother, and sister had often talked of legacies. It never so much as occurred to him to inquire whence it came. So as he went to college, that was the important thing.

When a question came it was on this subject alone. Had his name been put down as had been promised, and could he go next term; and when satisfied on these points, he again warmly thanked his father and retreated.

The question that he did not ask was asked both by Mrs. Devereux and Letitia. By Mrs. Devereux in private, and was easily satisfied. But Letitia asked it at dinner.

“Whom can the legacy be from, papa? I am sure no relation has died lately, or we must have heard of it?”

“Not must. Be sure if it was of any importance the name would be mentioned; but it is not so.”

Mr. Devereux spoke in a tone of mild parental authority uncommon to him. It was adopted because he had observed that, when he snapped, Henry invariably took up the cudgels for the person rebuked.

At this moment Henry was occupied in sliding some morsels of tart into a little boy's mouth, who crouched at his side. This was a forbidden indulgence, and therefore the

more favoured by Henry. Mr. Devereux perceived his occupation, but passed it over, in the hope that it would distract his attention from the conversation.

“I can’t think why you say of no importance, papa,” said Letitia. “There never is a mystery without a cause. And if there is a cause for this secret, it must be interesting to know it. Don’t you think so, Henry?”

“Don’t bother,” he replied shortly, unwilling to be brought into notice. For having crammed too large a bit of pastry into little Simon’s mouth, he was in momentary expectation of an explosion.

Letitia pursed up her sharp lips, and muttered something about idiots. But as no one assisted her, the conversation fell to the ground.

## CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Mr. Conway had been told of Nora's intentions to her relations he had expressed some disapprobation. He disliked and mistrusted the Devereux family, and he thought a thousand a year a large sum to give away without further inquiry. The only part of the plan of which he approved was that part of which Mr. Fanshawe had been almost afraid to tell him—the doing the thing in secret.

“Simon Devereux is a bad man,” he said, “a dangerous man. If he gets the girl into



his power it may cause her trouble. Keep her from him as far as you can for the next two years at least. "I suppose, however, he added, with a dry laugh, "a young lady who comes of age at sixteen will not easily take the advice of guardians."

Mr. Fanshawe, wishing to influence Nora, repeated Mr. Conway's advice, smilingly adding the last sentence, saying he might as well give the whole.

To his surprise she then told him not only that she would take their advice regarding the Devereux family, but that she had made up her mind to ask them to resume their guardianship for two years, letting all things go on quietly till these were over.

"If I am to have all this I must make myself fit," she said; "I am more ignorant than a child of four. I must learn."

"And how?" he asked, amazed.

“It is all settled with Miss Willis,” she said, smiling.

Miss Willis was the name of the lady lately mentioned.

And so it was. She had consulted her, and by her advice had decided on taking a house at Cheltenham, where she understood masters of all kinds could be had; and thither she meant to go for two years, provided her guardians acceded to her request.

Whether or not Nora made her plans in the best way for supplying the deficiencies of her education, might be doubtful; but the intention did her credit. This was one of the fruits of her newly-acquired humility. Yet she did not entirely put dreams of the future aside.

On the evening before her final departure, she suddenly asked her guardian whether

she might make a slight change in her name; drop the y and the emphasis, and become simply Smith.

“Most people make a change the other way,” he observed.

“I think,” she said, with vexation, “that it is a misfortune to have been born with such a name as Annora Smythe. Nora Smith will pass much more quietly through the world.”

“And do you wish to pass quietly through the world?”

“Yes. Once, perhaps, I did not. Now I do. I am beginning a new life, and I would rather begin it as Miss Smith, who has offended no one.”

“I suppose, my dear child, you can do as you please; certainly, as far as common life is concerned. I suppose I might spell my name Phanshawe, if I chose; but I

should be an ass to do it ; and this one piece of advice I give you ; keep as far as you can from plots and alias's." He looked keenly at her.

"I don't mean to have alias's," she said, colouring. "You know I never liked my name—my first name, and I have often wondered that my father did not change the other. At the same time," she added, truth compelling her to speak, "I will own that I should be glad, if I did chance to meet with my cousins, to begin without prejudice. They might like, before they thought of hate."

"I thought so, I thought so," said Mr. Fanshawe, elated at having seen through her. "Well, I don't know what Mr. Conway would say, but I suppose in this small matter you may please yourself. At your time of life I might have felt as you do. Keep

out of harm's way, that's all ; and God bless you !”

Nora and Miss Willis established themselves at Cheltenham. At the end of a year they made a journey to Geneva. It was a painful visit. Monsieur d'Alberg was not improved by his marriage, or by the prosperity of his affairs. He found his wife a fool, and there was no domestic affection, therefore, to soften him. In the second place, she had already presented him with twin daughters, and he saw himself, in prospect, the father of one of those “long English families,” as he called them. In the third place, he did not wish for Nora to pass her remarks upon him, and he received her coldly.

Nor did her mother, except in the first moment of excited delight, repay her for

his coldness. Tutored by her husband, she maintained a painful reserve, and expressed but little of the affection she felt. Nora saw that she loved her, but their meetings were dull and spiritless, and after a few days she thought it best to depart.

She was pleased with her little sisters, and perhaps thought the more of them because of the contempt with which Monsieur d'Alberg treated them. On one occasion, when he was complaining of their birth in her presence, Nora, with more warmth than judgment, said he need not fear that her sisters should ever trouble him.

“Ah!” he replied, with a Frenchman’s shrug, “in a few years you will have a long family of your own, and then where will the sisters be!”

Altogether the visit was a failure, and joyless and disappointed, Nora returned to Chel-

tenham. She had not what Colonel Mannerling called the knack of running up intimacies ; and even while longing for something to love, remained solitary. For nearly a year longer she and Miss Willis plodded on their way alone.

With a sigh of weariness and a smile of hope, she saw her eighteenth birthday arrive, and then gave permission to her thoughts to settle in the future. On the eve of her birthday she went to London, and was again the guest of her guardian. The object of her journey was to consult with him about her future residence. She wished to buy a property, and to enter on the joys and cares of the management of an estate, "the more unformed and the wilder the better." These had been her words of instruction by letter.

She found Mr. Fanshawe prepared for the consultation. He had heard of a pro-

perty likely to be for sale in the course of a few weeks or months. The circumstances agreed with Nora's wishes, and the purchase appeared too advantageous a one to neglect. There were, however, disadvantages. There was no house; the climate was cold, and though a part of the land was of great value, a part was bleak and bare. He advised that she should herself go down and pass a short time in the neighbourhood, see with her eyes whether she liked the spot, and feel with her lungs whether the air was salubrious.

Nora consented with delight. It was autumn, and in the neighbourhood of this property was a kind of Spa, a place not of world-wide reputation, but of resort to the northern county in which it stood. Thither, still retaining her house at Cheltenham, she bent her steps for a few weeks. She ar-



rived there, she and Miss Willis, and the attendant of each, and engaged a small lodging-house, detached, though it stood in a row. The Spa was not generally visited by the great or gay of the world. It was a quiet place, resorted to by the large families of business men, by elderly ladies and small children. The scenery around was pretty, the air was bracing, and the inhabitants of the large towns in the county sometimes escaped for a week or two together to refresh themselves with the pure cold air. There were a large number of visitors at the time of Nora's arrival, but they were quiet people, and she quietly mingled with the throng. She caused no sensation. Some young girls said, "There is a new face. She is lodging at No. 6. I wonder if the other is her governess?" Some ladies'-maids also remarked the new ladies'-maids; but when

they heard that they served a Miss Smith and Miss Willis, they felt little interest. The names were too common to cause excitement.

About half a mile from the Spa lived a Squire and his wife. The Squire was past sixty, but his wife was not yet forty. He was a quaint, old-fashioned individual. He hated the present generation, and would probably have hated equally the last, and the one before that, and, in fact, all generations, unless they had been formed of persons whose tastes agreed with his own. His taste was to keep at home, and occupy himself with his own concerns, his own farm, his own tenants, his own books, and his own wife. Mrs. Elliott, his wife, was different. She was gay in spirit, and younger than her age. Her sympathies were much with the young generation, and she would have been

glad to diversify her life at home with occasional life abroad. She was, however, a sensible woman, and much attached to her old man, as she called him; and after one or two vain efforts to alter his taste, she conformed herself to it with a good grace.

While so conforming herself, however, she endeavoured to mix with the world by other ways, and besides alluring friends and relations to her house, she tried to make new friends when and where she could. The visitors to the Spa were scrutinized by her with a keen eye, and so soon as she saw a face with promise in it, she set about an acquaintance. Her position, which gave her the power of kindness and civility, made this generally an easy task; and though the promise was often ill-fulfilled, she had made a few acquaintances, who were added to the

stock of real friends. This success emboldened her to continue her scrutiny.

She saw Nora and Miss Willis at church, and, like the young girls, observed, "There is a new face." With more discernment she added, "There is promise in it." She made a few inquiries, and two days afterwards presented herself at No. 6, Montpellier Row.

Nora was in her bonnet, awaiting a ponyphaeton, in which she was about to proceed on a voyage of inspection and discovery. It was autumn, and the afternoons were short, and her heart was in her drive. Her habits were unused to, and indifferent to, society, and her visitor was received with coldness and ill-disguised surprise.

Mrs. Elliott was too quick not to see, and though her visits were usually received in a different spirit, she was too sensible not to

suppose it possible a person might find a visitor a nuisance. She still saw promise in Nora's face, and though she sensibly shortened her visit, she proffered more than usual civilities. She not only begged her to walk through her pleasure-grounds whenever she pleased, but expressed a wish to show her her garden, if an autumn garden could interest her.

Little heeded Nora the polite speeches—she was only wishing her guest away; and when the door closed, she said with an impatient sigh—

“She is gone at last. Now, Miss Willis, let us be off.”

“I am quite ready—but, dear Miss Smith,” with a little breathless gasp, “excuse me if I say a word.”

Miss Willis was a very conscientious person. If such a thing is possible, she was

too conscientious. She was not satisfied to walk by the broad foundations of right and wrong, but was always in nervous dread of overlooking some duty at her feet.

With some weakness, however, in her disposition, it so happened that this torturing scrupulosity was not unsuited to Nora. She had picked up broad notions of right and wrong, but had had little help in applying them to the trifles of daily life. She came to respect, even while she smiled at Miss Willis ; and never caught the sound of the little, timid, breathless "Excuse me," without bending her ears to hear. She knew she had done something which Miss Willis's acuter conscience condemned, and which, though it was agony to her to speak, her inward monitor impelled her to utter.

"What is it?" Nora said, pausing and smiling. "What have I done now?"

“Perhaps we had better go. I will speak as we drive along.” And having seated herself by Nora’s side, she made a little breathless oration on the duties of society, saying, Mrs. Elliott had meant to be kind, and it was not right to repel kindly attention, &c.

“You mean to tell me that I was abominably rude,” was Nora’s observation.

“No, you could not be rude. But you looked—you looked, in short, as if you wished her away.”

“And so I did.”

“Excuse me, but if you went to a person, meaning to offer them a civility, it would annoy you to be repelled.”

Nora made no answer. They had turned from the cultivated parts around the Spa into a wide, bleak expanse, and her eyes wandered over it with curiosity. But that

last observation sank deep. It recurred to her again and again. She was now planning out her future life, and the old dream of being the bounteous lady of a realm was returning. Another dream of certain cousins, of one cousin, was also flitting about her, and she asked herself how she should feel if her bounties should all be repelled.

“ We will return Mrs. Elliott’s visit,” she said, smiling, the next morning ; “ ought it to be to-day or to-morrow ? ”

The next day the visit to Thorneybank was paid.

Mrs. Elliott received them with more than graciousness. She showed them her autumn roses, with all the other beauties of a carefully-cultivated garden, and then walked part of the way homewards. When they parted she invited them to dine with her on the next evening but one, which was a Satur-



day. Nora was again taken by surprise, and, being wrapt in her own plans and designs, was not desirous of society. She hesitated, and cast about in her mind for a good excuse.

“I have not much to offer you,” Mrs. Elliott said, “a few friends and acquaintances dine with us ; but, as you may guess, my choice is not great.”

“However small it may be it will be great to me,” Nora said simply. “I have no acquaintance at all.”

“You have not had time to form acquaintance,” said her companion, with civility, though, indeed, she did not guess that her quiet guest was only eighteen. “But the time is now surely come, unless you mean to be a hermit, and deprive the world of what would—excuse me—grace it.”

“Oh ! no, I am no hermit. We will dine

with you with great pleasure." And they parted.

"That is a piece of luck," said Mrs. Elliott to herself as she walked back to her house. "I shall now have a young lady for Henry."

For Henry Devereux was to arrive at Thorneybank on the Saturday.

## CHAPTER XIV.

WE left Henry Devereux on the eve of attaining the object of his wishes. He went to college, and there remained for two years. His time of residence ended under no flattering circumstances. It was then suggested to him, mildly but firmly, that, unless he wished to be rusticated, he must return no more.

Not that Henry was guilty of any grievous offences. He was a favourite with all men who came within the sphere of his influence ; and his tutors, like Stephen Fanshawe, over-

looked his misdemeanours as long as it was possible to do so. But Henry was guilty of a boyish and mischievous spirit of insubordination. He would not submit to rules; he broke them himself, and incited others to follow his example; and the time came when patience was exhausted, and the warning was given.

Henry was exceedingly angry. He had been very happy at Oxford, and though he had no wish to distinguish himself as a scholar, he had a great wish to do all that a young gentleman ought to do, all that those with whom he associated intended to do. He meant to have passed decently through all examinations, and to leave college in the conviction that he had received in all points a proper university education.

He felt angry and aggrieved, robbed of his rights, and ill-treated by the world. Far

from being penitent, he was proudly resentful, and by his stern sense of his wrongs brought many to sympathise with him. It was not that his intellectual powers were insufficient to understand that the discipline of a college must be upheld. He was quite equal to reason, and reason well, would he have given himself up to thought ; but there was in his mind so singular a thoughtlessness, so strange a distaste to one moment's reflection, that at one and twenty he was still, in some points of view, an infant. An infant looks neither before nor behind, nor more did Henry. An infant thinks of no consequences to its words and actions, nor more did Henry. An infant lives in the innocent belief that all it does is well done, and so did Henry.

From the time of his leaving college to the present time only a few months had

elapsed, and those months had passed, in spite of the resentment of his mind, happily by. A kind young friend had helped him in some money difficulties—which, of course, had occurred on leaving Oxford; for though not specially extravagant, Henry was careless, and had a little debt, and the debt to the friend was to be repaid by little and little, leaving him power to enjoy the greatest part of his three hundred pounds a year in peace. He did enjoy it, therefore, putting his future out of his head, and wandering about as a young gentleman at large. When his father once or twice asked him frowningly what he intended to do in life, Henry lightly answered there was time enough to think, and absented himself from home and disagreeable questions as much as possible. But in truth Mr. Devereux only asked the question because he knew it was

disagreeable ; he did not imagine that Henry need turn his mind to business. The pleasure of touching an instalment of his property—viz., Nora's money—had in no degree abated his desire to possess it all, nor his confidence that he should do so in the end.

Mr. Elliott was distantly related to the Devereux, and having once seen Henry, took a fancy to him. Mr. Elliott hated the young generation with mortal hatred, but it was the young generation fused into a body that he hated ; to individuals he was indulgent, and the thoughtless boyish disposition of Henry was suited to his taste.

“He's not so bad as the rest,” he observed to his wife in apology for his fancy, and the same observation always followed a fancy. “He may think small beer of me, and I daresay he does in his heart ; but he

don't show it, and that's something. And I don't fancy that he cares more for getting on in the world than I did when I was a boy. They are all so precious knowing now-a-days, but he's not so bad as the rest. He likes to be a boy, and enjoy himself while he may."

Henry therefore had a general invitation to Thorneybank; and as at Thorneybank, or in its neighbourhood, there was a little shooting, and a little hunting, and a little fishing, and other diversions, he was not slow to avail himself of the invitation.

Mrs. Elliott liked him also; and though he, companionable and affectionate, was satisfied with the comfortable life he found under her roof, however quiet it might be, she, on hospitable thoughts intent, always endeavoured to provide special attractions when he came.



On the Saturday evening mentioned he stood with his back to the fire near Mr. Elliott's chair, watching the guests as they assembled. He was a good-looking young man, and his countenance might still be best described in Mrs. Ratcliffe's words. He had such a "sweet, mischievous look," that an amiable cannibal would certainly have cooked and eaten him at once.

He stood watching, and now and then addressing a remark on the sad condition of the roads to Mr. Elliott; for he had just arrived, and his arrival had been delayed by the extremely disordered state of the turnpike road.

"I don't see what turnpikes are for if they don't keep the roads in order," he said, with sage complaint.

"It's all of a piece," grunted Mr. Elliott, "nothing is done now-a-days. Nothing but

talk. They talk till I'm sick ; but what's the good of that ? ”

“They do talk,” Henry replied with hearty agreement. “I bought a newspaper on the way, and I believe twelve columns were full of men's speeches. They go spouting about the country, and making a bother ; and I don't see what good it does. It would be better to mend the roads.”

“It's all of a piece,” Mr. Elliott grunted again, and said no more, for he was chary even of abuse before dinner.

Mrs. Elliott now approached him.

“How do you like the look of your company ?” she asked.

“Oh ! I like them very well,” he replied. “I am not fastidious.”

“That is a covert way of depreciating my guests,” she said, laughing ; “but don't be

alarmed. I have got a reserve ; a very nice young lady for you."

"Then I wish you would not," he said, with vexation. "Why a young lady? The very last thing I like is a young lady."

"Is it?"

"Indeed it is ; and I am not singular—I hear many young men say the same. Now-a-days, wherever one goes, one is provided with a young lady. It never used to be so ; was it, Mr. Elliott?"

"Never. A woman used to be a woman, and there was an end of it."

"I doubt it," said Mrs. Elliott. "However, I do as I would be done by. I know, till I met with my old man, I used to like to have a young one."

"Well, I am sure I don't. I would far rather have you, Mrs. Elliott."

"But you can't have me. I am the pro-

perty of that grave squire out there, J.P., and other letters besides. Take my advice, and be pleased with the young lady."

"I will make myself useful, of course; only I can't help thinking this new plan a dreadful bore."

"I don't think you will find her a bore; and, besides, you may form some useful designs. I won't vouch for the truth, but it is reported here that my young friend has a little money."

"And of all things in the world what I most *hate* is a girl with money."

Henry's vehement speech was stopped by a tap from Mrs. Elliott, and she hurried away, to be near the door to meet Nora, who had just been announced.

She supposed Nora would be shy, and kindly accompanied her across the room to a sofa. But Nora was not shy. She had

been too much wrapt in her own thoughts all her life to think of the eyes of the world ; and it is the dread of the eyes of the world that makes the shyness of such occasions. She calmly accompanied her hostess, was introduced to Mr. Elliott as she passed, and to a lady, by whom she sat down ; and all the while she had never even thought of the curious eyes that were watching her. Poor Miss Willis, on the contrary, who was always afraid of doing something wrong, felt, as she followed her, that every gaze was fixed on her feet, and her feet, in consequence, growing unruly, she first trod on her gown, and then stumbled over a stool.

It was not only because Nora was new that she was looked at. There was also a decision to be made whether or not she was handsome. That she was so was of course proved by the speculations on the subject ;

but the degree in which the beauty was allowed, was according to differing tastes. She looked old for her years; the smoothness and freshness of girlhood were not wanting, but there was a something about her unlike youth. Her features, though soft and pensive, were firmly cut; her dark eyes were quiet and grave; and all her movements, though light enough, had a composure which was not young.

Nor was her dress according to the common taste for eighteen. It was a beautiful black velvet, made without any trimming; and she had one red rose in her hair. The dress became her, but it was a matronly dress.

Of all affectations, the only one that is pardonable is that which assumes the sober dress of maturer years; and this because it is not a falsehood, for a few years must in-

evitably make that a truth which is only forestalled. This affectation Nora had. She liked to hear that she looked twenty-five; and in governing her ways, she endeavoured not only to assume, but to obtain, the calm judgment and sober sense which experience gives. She had planned out her life as for one who intended to be a looker-on, a helper to others, not a sharer in the common joys and sorrows of her kind. It was her utter loneliness in life that made this cold kind of dream her dream of the future.

When she had seated her newly arrived guests, Mrs. Elliott returned to Henry.

“What do you say now?” she asked, playfully. “Do you like your young lady?”

“Not at all.”

“Indeed! Now, I think she is one of the most attractive-looking persons I ever saw. You must call her handsome.”

“She is too superior-looking to please me,” he said, stubbornly. “I like superior old people, but I can’t bear superior young ones.”

“Nor I, often ; but this girl is so simple and straightforward that, though superior, she did not offend me. I think you will like her.”

“Pray don’t trouble yourself about it, Mrs. Elliott. Of course I don’t expect always to have the most agreeable companion that can be imagined, but I hope I do my duty like a man. What is the young lady’s name, and what are her connections ? Let me be forearmed, that I may not abuse her dearest relation.”

“Her name is Miss Smith. You must be very careful indeed, or you will surely get into mischief.”

“That I shall. So she doesn’t even attain



to the aristocratic distinction of Smythe. I honour her for that."

He spoke with vehement and bitter irony. Mrs. Elliott laughed, and added,

"She is only a visitor at the Spa, and I have made few inquiries about her. But if you do not abuse either the Smiths or the Smythes, I daresay you will get safely through dinner."

She left him, and immediately afterwards dinner was ready, and she called him to his charge.

"Mr. Henry Devereux," she said, naming him to Nora.

Nora stood amazed and transfixed, and in a maze sat down to dinner. This moment, often pictured in her dreaming, but not hoped for in her daily fancy, had, then, arrived! Henry thought so superior and composed-looking a young lady ought to

bear the burden of conversation. Nora, wrapt in her agitating thoughts—for they were agitated, she knew not why—thought not of conversation at all. The soup went round, and was eaten in silence. While Henry was accepting some fish and some fish-sauce, she, not having yet seen his face, raised her eyes and looked curiously at him. As Henry put the sauce on his plate, he thought the time was come when he ought to speak, and turned his head in the same moment to address her. He met her grave inquiring gaze fastened on him.

“What are you looking at?” he said, startled and astonished.

The next moment he coloured, and felt abashed at his question. Vanity suggested that he was worth a look, and modesty that he ought not to have noticed it.

“I was looking to see who had taken me

in to dinner. The whole company is new to me. Even Mr. Elliott I never saw before."

The answer was given with the grave unabashed simplicity of a child. Henry's feeling of flattered vanity was put to flight, but he felt better disposed towards the superior young lady than he had hitherto done, and they fell into conversation.

"I don't know them all myself," he replied, feeling comfortable, nevertheless, in the superiority of his position, "but I will tell you those I do know." And he gave a slight sketch, not ill-natured, but boyishly mischievous, of every person present.

Totally unaccustomed to the society of young people, and more especially to ways and manners of this kind, Nora laughed as she never had laughed before; and Henry, flattered at her tribute to his powers,

thought her charming, and exerted himself to be agreeable.

“Mr. Elliott is worth knowing,” he said, as he finished up his sketch with his host. “It is so jolly to hear an old fellow abusing everything and everybody. I often make him do it for fun, and he never finds me out.”

He then abruptly changed the subject, and asked her if she did not find the Spa very flat.

She innocently asked if he meant dull, and with laughing eyes but demure voice he replied that he did.

“No, not dull. I have too much to do to be dull.”

“What *can* you have to do?” he asked, curiously.

And with openness and simplicity she replied that, being almost alone in the world,

she had to manage her own concerns; and that, having been but ill-prepared for it when she was a child, she had to try now to make herself fit.

Henry cast a glance of respect upon her. Her superiority seemed to be coming up to the surface, and he felt inclined to draw back and be less friendly in his manner. A short silence followed. During that time Nora had been thinking about him—wondering what were his character and thoughts, and wishing to discover. Before he broke the silence by the introduction of any other subject, she took courage, and said,

“May I ask you the question you asked me? What do you do all day?”

“Oh! I do nothing,” he said quickly.

“Nothing! But how tiresome! When I have nothing to do, then is the time that I feel miserable.”

“You must understand, Miss Smith,” he said very seriously, “there are two meanings to the word nothing. You use it in one sense; I use it in another. I guessed what you would understand by the word, and so I replied to you in your own language. According to *your* understanding I do nothing. *I* use the word differently.”

“Then in your sense of the word?” she asked, smiling.

“I amuse myself. At this moment I may say I do nothing but amuse myself. I read a book if it amuses me; if it don’t, I shut it up. I go to a house, and if it amuses me, I stay as long as I am wished for; if it don’t, I go away. I talk to a person if he amuses me; if he doesn’t—I am not speaking of common civility, in which, I hope, I am not deficient—I move away. This kind of

life you would call doing nothing, but I find it pleasant enough."

"I daresay it is for the moment; but it would not do for life," slowly considering, and shaking her head. "When you think of the future don't you——"

"The future is a bore," he interrupted, decidedly. "I *never* think of it."

Nora was silent. She was thinking.

"If you ask me what I think," Henry began, again speaking rapidly, as if her thoughtful countenance forced him to address it, "I will tell you what it is I do think; and that is, that people think a great deal too much. Young people, I mean. I am all for the thoughts of the old, and wise, and experienced; but I cannot bear to hear young people so knowing and so prudent as they are now-a-days. The very school-boys are made to think how they are to get

on in life. In my opinion there is no use, and no good, in putting scheming thoughts into schoolboys' heads. Young people ought to enjoy their youth, and leave the cares of their life to those who have a right to care for them. I beg your pardon," he said, stopping himself suddenly. "You must know this is a favourite topic of mine, and one on which I preach to my intimate friends by the hour together. But I have no right to inflict it on you; especially as you will not agree with me, I know."

"I really don't know," Nora replied, and she raised her eyes with a perplexed look. "I never thought on this subject at all. I don't know whether I agree or disagree. Perhaps I agree."

"Oh! no, you don't. You say you wish to improve yourself, and I daresay you are full of prudent schemes."



“For myself, yes. I think my only wish is to be useful in the world. But then, I am no rule for other people. I am very lonely. I hope most others are happier than I am.”

“Then you would allow happy people to enjoy themselves.”

“I think I would, but I have not considered. I am prudent, you see. I will not give an opinion without thought.”

“I don’t mind that,” he said, with condescension. “I assure you I have no particular admiration for fools.”

There was a good deal more conversation during dinner, for, though Nora was often addressed by her other neighbour, Henry considered her as his own property for the time being, and as often as she turned away watched his opportunity to recall her attention to himself.

When the gentlemen came into the drawing-room, the ladies were already entertaining themselves with music. A Miss Romer, a lady singularly unprepossessing in manner, conversation, and appearance, was playing, and Nora was seated by her, absorbed in attention. This singularly unprepossessing lady became while playing like one inspired, and, in consequence of her talent, received at all times considerable attention.

Henry was fond of music, and as he could not reach Nora, he seated himself by Mrs. Elliott and Miss Willis. They were listening, but were at a greater distance, and were occasionally talking as well as listening.

“Yes, it is wonderful,” Mrs. Elliott was saying. “Whence comes such a gift, and why is it bestowed on so strangely unsuitable a person?”

“By way of compensation, perhaps,”

Miss Willis said, "lest a poor human being should be too much despised."

"That is just what I should have said," Henry burst in, "only not so well. How I do hate this way of wishing to account for the use of everything, and laying out everything by rule. We all are what we are, and the worst of us have our accomplishments and our amiable qualities, I dare say."

"I am rebuked, indeed," Mrs. Elliott said, laughing; "but notwithstanding your rebukes, I wonder still. Whence come those chords? They cannot be mechanical; and where is the soul lodged that produces them?"

They were the finishing chords of a beautiful piece of Mendelssohn's, and Miss Romer rose up, cold, ugly, portly, and impassive, and seated herself near Nora.

“Do you sing?” she asked abruptly.

“A little.”

“I fancied you did. Pray sing.”

Nora blushed, and Mrs. Elliott and Henry came forward to make a civiller request.

She sang, and one or two others sang, and then, at Mrs. Elliott's request, she sang again. Her voice was sweet and fresh. She sang with pleasure, and she gave pleasure. Her second song was a well-known English song. Henry, delighted, rose from his seat near Miss Willis, stood behind her, and after two or three bars, took a second, slightly, but correctly. Nora, surprised, stopped and looked round.

“I beg your pardon,” he said earnestly, stooping down to address her, “do I put you out?”

“Oh! no.”

“Oh! pray go on!” shouted every voice;

and Nora once more began, a strange sensation in her heart and in her throat, as their voices united again, and united most harmoniously in the song.

“I beg your pardon, and I beg everybody’s pardon,” Henry said, when they had done.

“And I will not hear of such a thing as pardon,” cried Mrs. Elliott, warmly. “Now, talking of accomplishments, as we were just now, where have you lodged *your* accomplishment all this while?”

“I don’t know. I discovered it by chance two or three months ago, and am extremely proud of it. But the curious thing is that, though I can take a second, or make a second at a moment’s notice, I know nothing of music—nothing whatever. It seems a thing with which I have nothing whatever to do.”

“That is like me, sir,” said Miss Romer. “My musical talent comes direct from Heaven.”

“I don’t know what to say about coming from Heaven,” replied Henry, demurely; “all I mean to say is that I have taken no trouble with it, and have no influence with it.”

“Will you be so good as to have this influence with it,” said Mrs. Elliott, “to make it sing again? Will you give us a song of your own?”

“Oh! no, I can’t sing alone. That is the curious thing. I am told I am very correct as a second; but my solo pieces are another thing.”

“Oh! let us hear one!” cried many voices.

“No, indeed. Such as I do sing are not at all fit for a drawing-room. Not that I

sing any harm, Miss Willis," turning and addressing her, though the poor thing certainly made no sign; "the songs are innocent enough, but boisterous, and perhaps vulgar. I sing sometimes at suppers, but never elsewhere. If Miss Smith will sing again, I will with great pleasure do my second, but not otherwise."

Nora reseated herself, and turned over some of Mrs. Elliott's music.

"Do you mind?" he said, bending down again, and speaking with unwonted gentleness. "Did you think me impertinent?"

She looked round at him, and shook her head. He helped her to the choice of a song, and again their voices united, and with a sweetness and harmony that riveted the attention of the hearers, and exercised a kind of fascination over themselves. Nora especially, possessed of her secret, felt a

strange emotion. Her heart beat quick, and with difficulty she governed her voice, and kept it steady.

The party dispersed, and Henry and Mr. and Mrs. Elliott remained alone.

“Well, how did you like the young lady?” she said, archly.

“I liked her very well,” he replied, with stately indifference.

“I thought Miss Smith a very well-behaved young lady,” observed Mr. Elliott.

“So did I, sir,” he then added, seriously—“not at all like a modern young lady.”

“No,” said Mr. Elliott—“quiet and civil, respectful to her betters, and modest in her ways. I tell you what, Mr. Henry, you may go further and fare worse. Powderham has been telling me that he is sure she is rich.”

“That I am sure she isn’t,” he replied



sharply. "She as good as told me she was not happy."

"Happy!—what has that to do with it? Are you one of those young men of the day who think money all in all?"

"I!" cried Henry—"I care for money!—no, indeed; I like to have what is proper for my position, but otherwise money is my abomination. But I mean to say that I don't think she is rich. I should say that she wished, on the contrary, to make herself rich. From some things she said, I almost fancy she wishes to keep a school."

"A school! Gammon! She does not wish any such thing. Powderham says he hears——"

He stopped.

"What does Mr. Powderham say?" Henry asked, curiously.

"Now I think of it, he told me to keep

his surmises to myself. I am sorry to balk your curiosity."

"My curiosity!" cried Henry—"I have none. Why should I care?"

Mr. Elliott and Henry were well suited to each other, for each, with perfect unconsciousness, responded to the other's intentions. Mr. Elliott could always be made to abuse the day, and Henry could always be teased. Both, therefore, exulted in their superiority, and enjoyed the position of superior knowingness.

## CHAPTER XV.

THE following morning Henry walked with Mr. and Mrs. Elliott to church. As he returned home, and during luncheon, he was fractious, exceedingly ready to be teased, and not good-tempered about it. This was because of a disappointment. He had expected to meet Nora, and perhaps to walk with her ; but though he had seen her in church, Mr. and Mrs. Elliott had walked out, and walked on homewards, without waiting to converse like their neighbours at the church door. Such being their conduct, he had felt bound to accompany them.

As they rose from luncheon, Mrs. Elliott said to him, "I am going to church again, but I suppose you will not come?"

"And why should you suppose any such thing?" he replied sharply. "Why may not I be as good a Christian as my neighbours?"

"Oh! then will you come with me? I shall be delighted to have your company for my walk. My old man never will go twice to church. He says he was not brought up to it."

"Nor more I was. And I tell you what, Mr. Henry, all the church-going of the present day has no more religion in it than there is in Tom Jones. One goes to hear fine music, and another goes to abuse the new altar-cloth, and another goes to laugh at the old altar-cloth."

"Yes, sir," said Henry, who certainly

could not be accused of being a great church-goer; "and another goes to hear the new curate intone so beautifully."

"Yes," cried Mr. Elliott, "and another to laugh at the poor old rector because he can't intone; and if he could intone ever so well, would not do it—no, not to please the whole generation; and he's right."

"Well, never mind," said Mrs. Elliott, who, knowing her husband could be worked up to insanity on any religious party question, dreaded such subjects; "we have no intoning here. And if our young curate preaches this afternoon, we are sure to have a good sermon. Will you be in the garden at a quarter before three?"

Henry acquiesced, and Mr. Elliott observed drily,

"And some go to church to see a young lady."

On which Henry coloured, and said bitterly,

“If you mean me, sir, I don’t seem to have attained my object this morning.”

“No. I wish you more luck this afternoon.”

“But I did not say it *was* my object,” Henry began; and then, struck suddenly with his folly, bit his lip, looked foolish, laughed, and walked out of the room.

On their way to church Mrs. Elliott observed,

“Mr. Elliott does not approve of gossiping outside the church door. He thinks it irreverent, and says he was brought up differently. It is often a disappointment to me to turn away, but I think he is in the right, and I generally try to follow his example. This afternoon, however, I want to persuade a few of my acquaintance to come up to

Thorneybank to tea ; we will therefore wait in the road till the congregation passes us.”

Henry immediately recovered his good temper. He might have guessed that his thoughts had been read, and that this was a plot of his kind hostess to meet his wishes ; but he was not accustomed to reflect, and only thought how easily he could now accomplish his purpose of seeing a little more of Miss Smith.

She and Miss Willis, and three other ladies, accepted Mrs. Elliott's invitation ; and as the October day closes in early, they walked to Thorneybank at once. Mrs. Elliott and the three ladies in front ; Henry, with Nora and Miss Willis, behind.

Mrs. Elliott had said that if the young curate preached there would be a good sermon. He had preached, and there was a good sermon. This young curate was not

an eloquent speaker, nor was he remarkable for talent, nor apparently remarkable in any way, but he always preached well. Sometimes his sermons were more excellent than at other times, but from the first day when he began to preach he had never been known to preach a dull sermon. Wherein his gift consisted no one knew, but when he went into the pulpit every countenance expressed satisfaction, and when he ceased no one looked weary.

On this Sunday his text had been, "He went about doing good," and for twenty-three minutes he gave his thoughts on this text, riveting, while he spoke, the attention of his hearers. *While he spoke!* For the most part, when he had done his words were forgotten. The cares of the world came in and replaced them. But in every congregation there are one or two who, having a



sincerer desire for help and advice than the rest, have truly ears to hear.

Nora was at this time in great want of advice ; her mind, always thoughtful, had become active in thought ; her conscience had become more quick. Her responsibility had begun to weigh on her in a more religious sense, and the mind, centred on itself and its needs, was seeking food and help wherever it cast its eyes. The sermon of the young curate had taken her by surprise. She almost felt that it was addressed to her ; and when she left the church she was like a person in a dream, or like one conning over a lesson that has to be learned. In this mood she half-reluctantly accepted Mrs. Elliott's invitation, and, with little thought of the requirements of society, walked along wrapt in her reflections.

Henry and Miss Willis talked as they

walked. Henry had taken a fancy to Miss Willis the night before. Her gentle, timid manner, and pleased reception of the commonest attentions, gave her a kind of attraction, and he talked to her for some little way without dissatisfaction. It was Nora, however, who interested him against his will; and when he had told Miss Willis of Mr. Elliott's distaste of gossiping at the church door, had heard her warm agreement in the same opinion; when he had laughed at her about it, asking if it was a sin to say "How d'ye do?" which expression he pronounced in ten different tones of voice, mimicking all the varieties of voices, ages, and characters that might be found at a country church door, he turned to Nora. Though Miss Willis was laughing heartily at his wit, she was still immersed in thought, and he was piqued.

“If I may ask, what are you thinking about?” he said, abruptly.

Nora started. She had been quite unaware how profoundly she was reflecting.

“I was thinking about the sermon,” she replied. “Was it not wonderful?”

“It was good, I think,” he replied, with condescension. “Yes, I think it must have been good, because I listened to it, which does not happen to me above twice a year. But was it wonderful? How? In what way?”

“Wonderful in advice,” she said, with a kind of sigh. “I never thought before what one’s life ought to be.”

Henry stared.

“One’s own life!” he said. “Oh! dear, no. I don’t suppose all our lives could be like that.”

“Was not that what he said? That if

everyone set before his eyes the one desire to go about doing good, this world would be a different place from what it is."

"I daresay it would, indeed! But that does seem a little too much to expect of us poor mortals. Don't suppose," he added, with most innocent gravity, "that I am uncharitable. I like to give—I can't bear to see distress; and though I am not rich, I hope I never refuse to help a sad thing that comes in one's way. But to go about looking up pains and troubles, is quite another thing; and I can't say I think that would be a proper plan to pursue."

Nora made no answer. She was thinking very deeply, and his speech did not hit upon her tone of thought.

Miss Willis, with her breathless gasp, said,  
"And yet I think I do know people whose lives are like what the preacher de-

scribed—who do go about looking for pains and troubles, that they may relieve them.”

“Well, Miss Willis,” Henry said, reluctantly, “I think I do know one such person. It is not common, but I do know one; and that person is a man. And I do believe that he not only looks up pains and troubles, as I said, but that he also considers how he can give pleasure, which is more. I believe he gets up every morning thinking what good he can do.”

“Is it Mr. Fanshawe you mean?” she cried, amazed.

“Yes. What do you know of Mr. Fanshawe?” And he looked eagerly at her.

“Oh! I know him a little,” she said; then, suddenly conscious of indiscretion, added, “I made his acquaintance a year or two ago—not more.”

“How curious! And do you also know him?” and he turned to Nora.

“I do a little,” she replied with a blush.

He saw the blush, and something prompted him to say, with a vexed manner,

“I am very sorry you know him. He is my best friend and my worst enemy. I mean he tries to be my friend; but he thinks a great deal worse of me than I deserve, and has used me, as I think, very ill. I should be sorry that you spoke to him about me.”

Nora made no answer. She felt exceedingly uncomfortable. Concealment was bringing her into difficulties; and yet at that moment she could not risk a discovery of herself. She walked on in silence. Miss Willis, alarmed at her indiscretion, and much more alarmed lest she should have to take part in anything like disguise, remained

silent also ; and Henry, huffed at receiving no complimentary observation from Nora's lips, would not speak.

The silence at length struck Nora, and impelled her to action. After walking a short distance, she began to talk of the singing of the previous evening. Though the change was abrupt, it was natural, and Henry fell into it at once. They entered into a musical discussion, so interesting and animated that before they separated he had asked leave to call on her the following morning, that he might inspect her collection of songs.

## CHAPTER XVI.

“**A**RE you going out, Miss Willis?” asked Nora, the following morning, seeing her with her bonnet on. “Mr. Devereux is coming to look at my songs, and I would rather you were at home.”

“Oh! certainly, I will stay,” Miss Willis replied, though she looked surprised.

She left the room, and presently returned without her bonnet. Her countenance had a perplexed, dissatisfied look, and after a short time there came, “Excuse me, dear Miss Smith, but I must say a word,” and then she gasped.



Nora knew what it was, and after a moment's thought replied—

“I agree with you before you speak. But how is it to be done?”

“There would be deception if it was allowed to continue any longer.”

“Deception, no,” Nora said indignantly. “He has never spoken of his relations, nor asked me about mine. Why was I to force my history upon him?”

“Because—because—I think because of the peculiar circumstances, you know. Excuse me, but indeed I lay awake last night thinking what I should do if he spoke of Mr. Fanshawe again.”

“Don't trouble yourself,” Nora said, smiling. “It shall be done. But how?”

She went and stood in the window, and she murmured to herself,

“It is hard. Just when I was making one friend.”

But her feeling that it must be done was as strong as that of Miss Willis, and she stood revolving different turns the conversation might take, by which she might introduce herself as the unwelcome cousin.

When Henry arrived he came accompanied by Mrs. Elliott. Nora, though relieved for an instant, was disappointed, and felt more perplexed than ever how to proceed.

Mrs. Elliott seated herself by Miss Willis, and Henry, without alluding to the purpose of his visit, sat down by Nora, and said,

“Is it not curious? I have had a letter from that person this very day.”

Nora's pre-occupied mind could not guess what he meant, and she looked at him

in a bewildered manner which made him laugh.

“Mr. Fanshawe, I mean,” he said. “It struck me as strange that we should both be acquainted with him.”

“Oh! yes, I remember,” she said, with embarrassment.

The very opportunity seemed given, but with Mrs. Elliott sitting opposite she dared not enter on the disclosure.

“And my speaking of him was strange,” he added. “I had not given him a thought for weeks and weeks, and should not have given him a thought for weeks and weeks more, if it had not been for that sermon. Then here comes a letter from him.”

“I have often remarked that,” Nora said sagely, eagerly rushing from a personal into a general topic, “when once we have met with a name we meet it till we are tired.”

“He writes in his usual style,” Henry went on, leaving the general for the personal topic.

“And what is that?” Nora was obliged to ask, though she felt as if she was treading on hot coals.

“Of course, to persecute me.”

“Persecute !”

“Yes. Don’t you call advice persecution? I do. I think a sane person with common sense is much better able to regulate his affairs than those who know nothing whatever of the matter.”

“I rather agree,” Nora said, laughing. “At the same time,” she added, “I should be thankful for the advice, even if I did not take it. Advice is friendly.”

“Very friendly indeed !” in an ironical tone. “The purport of Mr. Fanshawe’s advice is that he thinks I am idling my time

away, and to beg me to consider seriously all that lies before me."

"That is good advice," Nora said, hardly knowing how to speak.

"Indeed it is not. I am only just of age, and a man must have a time of amusement in his life. Besides, there is really no need for me to be in a hurry. A kind individual left me a legacy, and I don't see why I am not to enjoy his kindness in peace and comfort."

A sudden flush of crimson on Nora's cheek arrested him. In vain she averted her eyes; guilty and trembling, she was unable to collect her thoughts, or conceal her embarrassment. A sensation, that was disagreeable, he knew not why, crossed Henry's mind. It was a feeling almost of jealousy of Mr. Fanshawe. He fancied he must have spoken of him in a tone that for

some reason was displeasing to Nora ; and what could that reason be ?

“Of course I am very much obliged to Mr. Fanshawe for his interest in me,” he observed, by way of apology ; but his tone was bitter.

Nora was relieved for the moment by Mrs. Elliott’s rising from her seat.

“I only looked in, Miss Smith,” she said : “I am very sorry I cannot stay and hear some music, but I promised an invalid lady to call this morning, and must go on.”

Nora walked with her to the door, and then into a small hall into which the drawing-room opened, accompanying her to the house door, Mrs. Elliott talking as they went, and turning back as she stepped out to speak again.

When Nora re-entered the drawing-room, Henry was at the pianoforte, and wrapt in

the contemplation of something. She had been for a minute or two absent, and in that time he had seized a heap of music, and had tossed it over, throwing it about as piece after piece appeared in which he felt no interest.

At the bottom of the heap were three pieces of music of an earlier date. On each one was written, "Annora Smythe, Geneva," with the year and date. Henry's attention had first been caught by the words, "Rule Britannia" on one of the pieces. It was a tune he liked, and his hand lingered on the name for an instant. In that instant his eye fell on a word, then on three words, and he stood contemplating them with a puzzled and troubled look. He did not suspect the identity of the two persons, but the sudden appearance of the hated name perturbed him.

There are persons whose temper is put out by an east wind ; there are others who are irritated by a cough ; there are some who shudder at the unseen approach of certain animals ; there are others who cannot command their impatience when music or certain airs are played. All these are involuntary irritations of the nerves, and something like one of these was the effect of the name Annora Smythe on Henry's mind. He hated her with a more voluntary kind of ill-will ; but there was, besides that other hate, a reasonless antipathy to her name, which had grown with his growth, and which affected his mind with an involuntary irritation, discomfort, and perturbation. At the mere sight he was no longer quite himself.

“What is the matter ?” Nora said smiling, as she joined him. She thought he had



found some much-liked or much-hated song. He raised his face with a blank, put out look.

“I was looking at that,” he said. “What is it? Do you know her?”

Nora’s face was crimson first, then pale. He looked at her with astonishment.

“Do you know her?” he repeated, in an angry, authoritative tone.

“I was—I mean I am Annora Smythe,” she said, trying to still her trembling; that trembling which was utterly reasonless, for what had she done?

“You!” He drew back from the piano-forte, and gazed at her with a gaze that was almost wild, while passionate blood flew in torrents to his face. “You! And why have you dared to cheat me in this way? None but you—none but *she* could have done it. I might have known it. I ought

to have expected it ; it is of a piece with her life. Most men would have had honour enough, bad as they are, to forbid such tricks ; but to her all meanness is possible. She—”

“ What have I done ? ” Nora cried, interrupting him with a fierceness like his own. She had stood at first paralysed ; but at the word “ meanness ” her haughty temper took fire.

“ What you have done ! Do you ask me what you have done ? Wait, and you shall hear. You have added this to the rest of your deeds, that, like a prying impostor, you have come trying to worm out the secrets of my life—prying into my ways, into my weaknesses and follies, if you will. I am not ashamed to own I have them ; it is for you to be ashamed of the meanness which would thus drag them out ! ” He seemed half-choked.

“Mr. Devereux,” Nora said tremulously and imploringly, “hear me!”

“Do you ask me what you have done!” he continued, neither heeding nor hearing her. “Wait, and I will tell you!” And from the inner recesses of his heart came pouring forth in passionate words all the thoughts cherished for years, facts true and facts false; the true warped and magnified, the false utterly false; his words vehement in tone, violent in language; his eyes glaring and flashing beneath his passion.

Nora stood for a time paralysed; to astonishment succeeded terror, and to terror a resentment that was half the effect of anger and pride, and half the sense of wrong and injury.

“If this is what you think of me,” she said, breaking in upon, but not stopping the torrent that flowed from him, “I leave you.

I could have borne much—this I will not bear.” And she turned suddenly and left the room.

Then only Henry paused. He paused because her sudden disappearance surprised him—not because his passion was at an end.

“Oh, Mr. Devereux!” Miss Willis said piteously; “what can you mean?”

“I am glad,” he said, clenching his teeth, “that for once, just for one moment in my life, I have had the power to tell her what I think. I shall be the better for it all my life long.” And he drew a breath of relief, almost of enjoyment, as if indeed he did feel relieved of a burden.

“You will not be glad,” she said gently; “when you have time to think, you will grieve over the words you have used.”

“I shall *not* grieve, Miss Willis. In cold blood I might never have dared to do it;

but her imposition upset my temper, and forced from me the history of my wrongs. I am glad I have spoken. Now we stand on equal terms. Now she knows what I think of her; and if ever we meet again, why—she knows what I think of her.”

“How have you wrongs?” Miss Willis said, eagerly, too much excited to feel her usual timidity. “Can *she* help it if she was born?”

“Do you think I quarrel with that?” he cried fiercely. “What is that to me? But there are few who, if they had used a person as I have been used, would not have made reparation. Little care has it been to her that a family has been struggling up in poverty; no pleasures in their lives, no education as befits their position. She has had the world at her command, but we are like the scum of the earth, and she is glad of it.

I myself have had the common education of a gentleman, only through the unforeseen kindness of a friend."

"But, Mr. Devereux, she—she—" gasped Miss Willis, "*she* was the friend;" her excitement, her agony of desire to heal the feud, indiscreetly drawing the secret from her.

"What do you say?" he said, looking as if he would eat her up.

She hoped it was eagerness to hear more, hoped it was dawning penitence; and as quietly and composedly as she was able, but, in fact, with great hurry and perturbation, told what Nora had done.

He stood to hear her, the crimson glow ebbing and flowing on his cheek. When she stopped, he was deadly pale; and though far from calm, he was stilled. For a moment or two he struggled to

speak, and could not; but at last he said,

“Will you be good enough to desire Miss Smythe to come down? I must speak to her.”

She did not understand his countenance, but she hoped much from his sudden composure, and went, and in a broken voice related to Nora what she had done.

At the moment Nora felt relieved. Her passion had faded, and the intolerable sense of wrong, of being so wrongly judged, was weighing upon her. But after an instant's consideration her feelings changed—so far changed, at least, that she desired Miss Willis to go down and say that she declined to obey his summons.

“I am not displeased,” she said kindly.

“I am sure you acted for the best, and I daresay it will prove for the best; but I will not see him—I cannot.”

Disappointed and reluctant, Miss Willis returned, and said Nora refused to appear.

“It is no matter,” he said, “you can tell her what I say. Go to her, if you please, and tell her that I would rather die, rather lie down and be ground into atoms, ground beneath a granite millstone, than lie down before her to receive her hated bounty!” He ground his teeth, and even clenched his fists.

“Oh! Mr. Devereux!” poor Miss Willis began, “consider——”

“If I go to work on the treadmill, if I steal,” he cried, passionately, “I would rather do it than be her slave! Tell her so. Tell her that it is in vain she plumes



herself on her bounteous gifts!—I scorn them and renounce them! She thinks she has humbled me. She will find it is not so easily done as she thinks. Tell her what I have said; and now I have done.”

Miss Willis repeated as little as she could of the scene that had passed; much was gradually, however, drawn from her, and almost with tears she begged Nora to forgive her for the indiscretion which had brought such consequences.

“Think of it no more,” Nora said; “it was a foolish plan, and it is right that it should have failed. My first dream is over.”

Deep was the disappointment which, however, the event of the morning caused. It struck on a sore place. She had

hoped to conciliate, and she had failed. She, in those days, had read Henry's character, and could see its faults and merits; but he, she found, had not read hers; he, after three days' intercourse, could still misdoubt and hate her. After a time from Henry her mind wandered to her mother. Her love she had also failed to retain; and the tears she had been ashamed to shed over her new disappointment fell fast when she recurred to that older one.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.







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